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negative #4 *capability*

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of the world.

Throwrug

One of the best
writers in the
underground, no
question.

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***Amusing Yourself
to Death***

Negative Capability
never once lapses
into boredom. You
can keep reading it
for a month.

Broken Pencil

In This Issue:

A Date With Al Goldstein

My Ass Is Delicious

I'll Burn That Bridge When I Come To It

Blatant Stupidity For Dummies

The Only Good Job Is A Blowjob

Schwa, Eminem Or Nietzsche?

Juli's New Maxi-Rant™

I Was A Pimp

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My Ass Is Delicious

Winner, 1st Place *Writer's Digest* Zine Awards

One of the best writers in the underground,
no question. — KARL "KING" WENCLAS

Sarcastic, rude and hilarious, this is the kind of zine that points out what you already know is totally ridiculous but had forgotten about. Such a service is deserving of your cash. **The amazing thing is that *Negative Capability* never once lapses into boredom. This is a zine that you can keep picking up and reading for a month.** — *BROKEN PENCIL*, THE GUIDE TO ALTERNATIVE CULTURE

This is one of the more amazing zines I've seen in a while. All you have to do is take a cursory look at the contents and you'll see that this is definitely a zine and a damn great one at that. Jøsh is a great writer with a great sense of humor who is totally honest and pulls no punches at all. **The whole thing is pretty damn great.** — *XEROX DEBT REVIEW ZINE*

This guy's almost a perfect life form—self-interested and not ashamed to say so, opinionated, convinced of his own superiority, and not afraid to put very dangerous photographs of himself in his own zine. We recommend all Swine get a sample. — *THE INNER SWINE*

Jøsh Saitz writes this zine himself and he does an excellent job at it. **I do not lie when I say that *Negative Capability* kept me entertained for hours, and I actually take pleasure in re-reading it.** Jøsh has got a great sense of humor and a downright inspiring publication here, so buy *Negative Capability*. Highly recommended. — *SKULL*

This zine is distributed by the wonderful people at Tower Magazines <towerrecords.com> as well as Ingram Periodicals, Desert Moon <dmoon.com> and Last Gasp <lastgasp.com>. It is also available in many excellent indie shops like Quimby's Queer Store <quimbys.com>, Bulldog News <bulldognews.com>,

I loved Jøsh's writing style! If you can get past his use of profanity, this zine might become a must-read for you. — *WRITER'S DIGEST*

Winner, Best New Zine Royal Fest

The best writing in zinedom today. Highly recommended. You fucking rule!

— *AMUSING YOURSELF TO DEATH*

The funniest, most thought-provoking, literate, relevant and agreeable thing I've ever read. — SIMON, UK

The covers of *Negative Capability* are always very cool, unique and interesting, but it's what's inside that counts. It's well-designed and editor Jøsh Saitz's writing ranges from juvenile to insane to brilliant. If you've got a sense of humor and appreciate quality writing, you can't beat *Negative Capability*. — *SUITE 101*

***Negative Capability* is great.** Funny, honest and WAY to the point. I love the writing 'cause it sounds like you're talking, not writing. I passed issue #1 to Jimmy Pop and he won't give it back (bastard!). The audiozine [*Misfit Toys*, see the inside back cover for ordering info] was just as funny. The Dr. Seuss/F. Scott Fitzgerald bit had me laughing like mad. — LÜPUS THÜNDER, BLOODHOUND GANG

You are a god. The latest *NegCap* is supreme! You are a genius that is underappreciated by the world. — DR. PAUL HARTUNIAN

***Negative Capability* is just the best thing. Thank you for doing a kick-ass zine. They are few and far between.** — SEAN GUILLORY

and Atomic Books <atomicbooks.com>. In Japan our exclusive dealer is the excellent new Wasabi Distro <wasabi-distro.com>. If you would like more info about advertising in the next issue, subscriptions or getting involved by distributing *Negative Capability*, please visit us online at <www.negcap.com/store>.

This Zines Ø Better Than	Straight 2 Forward	0 5 8 D C	A Date 12 With AI Goldstein
Nietzsche e 25 Or E	Blatant Dummies 26 For Stupidity	Welcome World 28 My To	Did 30 You Know !!!!
Rant™ Julie's 31 Maxi New	Bridge Il'l 32 That Burn	Pimp I 44 A Was	Whore I 45 A Was
Dead 48 To Me	The Job 59 Only Good	Who This? 64 Helped With	What Buy? 65 Can I

The cover is called "Fuck Your Symbols" and I did it because I've always wanted to burn an American flag. Garrett Holden took the picture while Peter Lopez and I set fire to everything. I got the flags from a creepy old street vendor who had crossed eyes and I bought two flags because they looked so cheap that I thought they would burn too quickly to photograph. While he searched the cardboard box in his van for the flags, he asked me where I was going to put them. I immediately said that I was going to send one to my mom and put the other up in my house, which was a blatant lie. He leaned into me and whispered, "You display this with pride. I did a year in the European theater in WWII and this flag is what America is all about. Let me tell you one quick story..." I wanted to tell him that I was planning to burn the flags and sell copies of the picture to degenerates like me, just so he would shut the fuck up. I got a face full of what I am guessing was whiskey and he said, "My buddy was fightin' the Japs and he got shot in the back of the head and it [the bullet] came out through his eye. He lost sight in both eyes... [ten minutes of depressing, semi-coherent rambling excised]... Today that man is a minister! A blind minister!" To me it sounded like the biggest waste of a life, ever. From hired killer for his government to a blind, deluded stooge for religion. Boozy McStretevendor thought it was supposed to be inspirational but it just sounded pathetic to me. As I gave him the \$5 for both flags, I noticed that the packaging said the flags were made in China. I didn't have the heart to tell him that his symbol of freedom was probably made by a slave laborer in Communist China because I didn't want to dispel his illusions. I would like to dispel your illusions because unlike that vendor, you can read, you bought this zine and I am hoping you that have a brain in your head. If not, please try *InStyle*.

Cover Story

Every goddamn thing in this zine is copyright © 2004 Josh Saitz and Negative Capability.

Sosumi

This zine was printed in Canada. Please visit the web site for much more at www.negcap.com and feel free to e-mail your thoughts and comments to josh@negcap.com. I love mail, so send some to:

Josh Saitz
Negative Capability
P.O. Box 12
Lenox Hill Station
New York, NY 10021-0030

This zine is dedicated to the amazing and wonderful Julibug, Bill Hicks, Robyn Hitchcock, Tenacious D, HBO, Eminem, THC, Underworld and Apple Computer. I couldn't live without any of them, but especially my lovely little Julibug.

STRAIGHT

I am now older than Bill Hicks will ever be and the only thing that I can do to justify my existence is to keep on doing what I'm doing: Expressing my own sincere opinions, writing the truth as I see it and to keep on shoving my obnoxious ideas down your throat like an uncircumcised cock.

Play from your fucking heart! — Bill Hicks

I'll speak to the masses through the media and if you got anything to say to me you can say it with cash. — Joe Jackson

I am sure that some people are surprised to see a new issue of this zine, but I have always planned to do at least eight issues, so now we're halfway there. My situation is common in the world of zines in that there has been a massive gap between installments, making some people wonder if I had abandoned this project. Fuck no, is my polite reply. I had a lot of other shit to do, like be a good husband and make money. When I was ready to print the first issue of my zine I had saved just enough money to either buy a new Mac or print the zine. I chose the zine. More than a year later I'd saved up even more, so it was either a great new computer or my next issue and I chose the zine again. When I got to my third issue almost two years later, I charged both a new computer *and* the zine and sank myself into a hole that took me a long while to climb out of. I had to do it. I had to print this zine at my own expense, no matter what.

few months, it got to be a little cramped for everyone and we moved to my Mom and step-father's house in Rockland County. We commuted to work in Manhattan, my wife as a forensic accountant (she is the kind that uses her powers for good) and I worked as a freelance Mac consultant and graphic designer. In my spare time, and for spare cash, I auctioned off a ton of stuff that I had accumulated in my life that no longer held any meaning for me, and when I pared down my life I felt a great sense of relief. I still feel like you can never have too many books, but I still have too many videotapes, too many audiotapes and too many CDs.

Since *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* came out I've squandered the majority of my free time carjacking old ladies, shooting cops in the head and setting bikini-clad rollerskaters on fire with a flamethrower. It was *way* more cathartic than writing naughty words in a zine could ever be,

story to tell. The main hurdle for me is that I am usually the most creative, funny and interesting between one and four o'clock in the morning. For the first time in many years I have a regular job as the IT Manager for C.C., a famous party planner, author, style guru, TV host and Mac-user. As a result of my employment, my life has become more structured than I would like it to be, but I like the money much more than I dislike the work, though that can change on an almost daily basis. I go to the gym at least five days a week and have lost thirty-five pounds in the past three years. I look and feel better than I have for a long time and I am so strong now that I could probably easily kick my own ass.

The City got bombed, they mailed us anthrax, then they cut off the power. It's real expensive to live here. We live in small places and it's dirty...

I am now back in New York City and delighted to be anonymous and isolated once again. I no longer have to fear anyone's road rage or an asshole in an SUV with flags on every window running me and my little Honda off the road. Everyone that knew me knew I would move back to NYC sooner or later, and my wife Juli and I returned for a million reasons. Well, maybe four reasons if we're being honest: Access to everything at any time, ownership in a place we've always called home, convenience, and fear of cars—and that's just off the top of my head.

We got tickets to fly back to New York on September 17, 2001. Our flight, along with every other flight, had been abruptly cancelled a few days earlier. We had been trying to sell our car for a while, but after September 11, I was able to convince Juli that we should keep the car and drive it back to New York.

When we decided we wanted to buy a place to live in New York City we made a plan. *Mi amigo* Pedro offered to let us stay in his second bedroom in Queens, where he was shacking up with his lovely girlfriend (now wife) Lisa. After a

and cathartic violence was what I really, really needed to clear my head. Between saving to buy a place, commuting, eating, sleeping, going to the gym, watching TV, smoking weed and making sweet love to my wife, I don't have a lot of free time. It's not easy to do a zine like this because some days I have to do laundry and some days I just want to steal a police helicopter and blow up an ambulance.

All of the last two and a half years were spent saving up to buy a co-op in Manhattan and my wife and I have never been happier. Getting here was a long, painful process—the seller died the weekend before we were supposed to close and the building shook us down for an insane security deposit before they would let us even *try* to get in. The co-op real estate system in Manhattan is the antithesis of everything that I think of as fair, legitimate and reasonable, but it's like complaining about the weather—you can bitch all you like, but it's never going to change, so you had better learn how to deal.

In the past few years I wrote pieces for the zine whenever I was inspired, motivated or had a good

In so many ways my life has changed since the last time I did an issue, but I think it's all for the better. I have a wonderful wife who loves me more than anyone deserves to be loved and a nice, cozy apartment in a quiet building with a roof deck and a back garden. I have a comfy purple velvet couch that my wife and I saved up to buy while she was still in college and we have blackout blinds in our bedroom so we can sleep whenever we want. In some ways, I am really easy to please, and in other ways, I'm the hardest motherfucker in the world.

As you'll either be reminded or soon discover, I am a compulsively honest person. Everything in here is as true as I can tell it and as fully detailed as I can remember. I sincerely believe that zines are one of the last bastions of free speech that is truly free. All of my words are unfettered by corporate or government interests and zines should always be done purely for the love and creative expression and there's not a goddamn thing that anyone can do to fucking stop me. Drink my fucking ass, censors! Since there are people all over the world who have suffered and

Everyone is a moon and has a dark side, which he never shows to anybody. — Mark Twain

FORWARD

died to make sure that I have the right to say whatever I want, I would like to thank them for their sacrifices and then make them regret their efforts. I don't have to do or say a redeeming thing to justify my opinions, but I'll try. I am sure that there are some petty, jealous zine publishers reading this now who are sharpening their knives and waiting to tell me how much I suck at this and I don't give a shit. Sticks and stones may break my bones, but man, your zine is boring.

I want you to know a lot about me not only because I think it's interesting but mainly because the knowledge that I have about what despicable scum humanity is slowly poisons my being and I want the poison out. I often think that men are cursed with the poison of semen and it's only when they can occasionally release that semen that they can finally feel at ease about who they are, for a few minutes. I believe in a lot of things and I am as sincere, honest and forthright as a person can be without it seeming like a cry for help. I am very moral, loyal, kind, sweet and thoughtful. From time to time I am a hypocrite either intentionally or not, but so are you, so let's not even get into it. We're all guilty on that one. Sometimes, late at night, when I'm really stoned or pissed off, I will sit down at my computer and write angry, vicious and often hilarious screeds that I call *Negative Capability*

always dangerous. America stands for so much fucking evil and hypocrisy that it's hard not to hate it and everything it stands for. I am glad that I live here because for people like me, it's much safer on the inside than the outside. If I am white and middle class and I'm terrified of America it must be awful for everyone else. If you're feeling indignant, please remember that "American" cars are made in Mexico and Canada while "Japanese" cars are made in the U.S., so don't tell me about hypocrisy. I'll light my bong with a burning flag if I want to and then piss on it to put the fire out. That feeling of indignation you have is exactly what I feel every day when I look at our fucking retarded commander-in-thief and his corrupt cronies as they put every single person I love in the cross-hairs for their own sick and selfish agenda. Let me remind you that your government is lying to you so why would you kill for it? You should know better.

I have no sympathy for people who die doing things that they shouldn't be doing. If you're a hooker who is killed by a john, that's a risk you take when you accept the assignment and as far as I'm concerned, being killed while in the commission of a crime means you were asking for it. When fisherman are swept off their boats or hunters are shot by other hunters I say, "If you live by the sword, you'll die by the sword."

Since I started *Negative Capability*, I've often been asked what it's about by stores, traders, reviewers and friends. I think people expect me to say something bland like, "It's a literary journal about polar opposites" or "it's about my obsession with collecting film negatives from around the world." Unfortunately, what this zine is about can't be boiled down to a simple catchphrase, so I usually tell people, "It's about what an asshole I am." That usually shuts them up, especially if they've known me for a while and don't think I'm an asshole at all. The thing is, inside my head, I feel like every emotion I have, every idea that I have and every expression I make is as true, legitimate, sincere and sane as anyone else's in the world.

There are times when even my wife thinks I'm crazy for feeling the way I do or for saying the things I say and she's the only person ever to get close enough to me to see who I really am. My brain may seem like a scary place to visit but I guess that's what this zine has always been about—what goes on in my head. I don't sugarcoat it, make sure it conforms to current PC thinking or even try to find a nice way to say things. In my head, I'm right and everyone else is wrong. In my life I have to deal with everyone else telling me that they're right and I'm wrong, so in this forum, the world of ideas will be

but guess what? We're not leaving. You can't kick us out. We're staying. Why? Because we're obstinate pricks. — Jon Stewart on New Yorkers

and I want to thank you for buying it. If you got it for free, you better read this whole fucking thing because I have put everything I am into these pages, into these phrases, into these designs and into these thoughts. This zine means the world to me, so please don't treat it like an ugly girl. It deserves better.

I would like to take a moment to bash all religions because I can, and because no one else with an articulate point of view will even venture near the subject. If you read the Bible, or the Koran, or even the Torah, they collectively make less sense and contradict themselves more often than the *Matrix* films. Anyone who sincerely believes in the Rapture, when God will magically pull all saved people out of their moving cars before destroying the rest of us heathen scum, is insane. If you put a bumper sticker on your car that says, "In Case of Rapture, This Car Will Be Unmanned" you ought to have your license revoked and your head examined, you fucking deluded retard.

Patriotism is not something I think about very often, but I know that blind allegiance is

If you're a drunk driver and you're paralyzed from an accident that *you caused* and now you have to shit into a bag glued on your abdomen, I can't think of a more fitting punishment.

My wife and I visited my grandmother in Florida recently, where it's compulsory for Jews of a certain age to be relocated, and my sister came from LA to meet us there. Over fro-yo with the women in my family, my grandmother said that she was surprised by how well I turned out because most people who've had a life like mine don't turn out to be productive citizens, compassionate husbands and nice Jewish boys. Like most other members of my family, she really expected me to be a pissed off, anti-social misfit. I'm used to people being wrong about me and I've just learned to ignore it. I've always believed that the right people will understand what I am doing in this zine. It may be jarring at first but if you examine what I am saying closely, it will at least make you decide how you feel for yourself. Or you'll get so fucking sick of my insane ego that you'll throw this zine away so that no one else could accidentally read it.

defined as I see it. You are free to disagree with me because I don't always agree with what I've said forever, because I have an open mind.

For example, I used to hate rap and even went so far as to say that technically, it isn't music. I've changed my mind. I actually like a little rap, especially Eminem, DMX, 50 Cent and even the ODB. I have always liked the Beastie Boys, but more because they're Jewish than because they're white. They also rap about shit I know—bitches and New York City. I still think most rappers are inarticulate and mangle my beloved English language, but the rage is sincere and I'm all about sincerity. As DMX says, "I've done it all—from mackin' two ho's in a three-way, Dominican ho's on B'way and country ho's in VA—and they all say the same about my game—it's tight." I didn't realize what my music collection had been missing and now I know—songs about beating up women, getting high, driving an expensive car and being a motherfucking pimp.

Despite the fact that I consider myself a wordsmith first and everything else somewhere far behind that, I really dislike writers in general.

I don't sit here crafting structured sentences while trying to be poetic or profound, because unlike most other writers, I don't presume to know more than my readers. I'll tell you all the stuff that I know and you can tell me if you knew that shit already. I hope that you all learn something interesting and new, even if the only thing you learn is that you disagree with everything I have to say.

There's only one piece of fiction in this issue (I don't have to label it—if you think it's real then you might be retarded) and like all my fiction, it has nothing to do with me. All of the events in the story happened exactly the way I wrote it, but it's not real. The main reason I don't enjoy other people's fiction is that it's almost always thinly-veiled and pretentious autobiography. This entire zine is my pretentious autobiography without the bogus tag of "fiction." Obviously some of the things I am about to tell you are personal and painful, but I've always felt that life is not about what's given to you but what you do with it, so if you're stuck with a baby arm, you can still learn to juggle two balls one-handed.

I still wonder how it's all supposed to turn out for me. I used to think that I was just stumbling through life looking for something to do that gave my life meaning. I found what I was looking for in a gorgeous and hilarious 4'10" redhead from La Cañada, California. Some time soon we're going to have our one and only child and I'll take a well-earned sabbatical from paying work to do family work and be a good guy. If you think that's terribly sweet, please hold that thought. Before you decide that I'm a sweetheart, read the rest of this zine, and if you think I'm the only one that's angry, please read my

wife
Juli's brand new
Maxi-Rant™. Don't blame
me for the way she is because I can
assure you that she was like that when I met
her and that's exactly why I fell in love with her. We are
both a little good and a little evil and that works for us.

In my last issue, I wrote about this documentary I saw about explorers that used to go to Antarctica and catch sweet, gentle penguins, keep them in the hold of the ship and essentially use them as live firewood. I love penguins more than any other animal in the world for reasons too numerous to mention and the thought of penguins being thrown into a fire by some greasy sailor used to give me nightmares. I swear, this is the goddamn truth. But once I wrote about it, once I publicly indicted the ghosts of the people responsible, I felt like I was able to pass the burden of that to someone else. Now when I think about the penguins, it takes on a cartoonish falseness, like it's too sick to possibly be real. It's just a cartoon or a fairy tale and my subconscious mind has somehow been able to cope with the knowledge of this unbearable cruelty by utter denial.

I have to keep writing about every evil, fucked up thing that is in my head so I can be rid of it. I have been an atheist since I was eleven—my brother and I were thrown out of Hebrew school because I was arguing with the teacher and demanding proof that there was a G-d (that's for my bro, yo!). So I can't confess my sins and be forgiven because my parents were Jews and the Jesus Myth is just so goddamn ridiculous that I have a hard time dealing with

anyone who is into Jesus. I mean, Jesus Fucking Christ, here in New York City, Ash Wednesday is one of the funniest days of the year. Everywhere you go, you'll see people from all walks of life, in all different kinds of clothes, all walking around in public with a huge black smudge in the middle of their foreheads. It's unbelievable to me that in this day and age there are people who think that having a smudge of ash on their head is going to do anything good for them or G-d. That's fucking retarded and now your head's all dirty. It's almost like their G-d keeps them in line by constantly punking them out. Have a cracker, repeat this prayer over and over like a mental patient, cut your head open, wear some ashes, feel guilty, and don't forget, you can only fuck when you're married *and* only to have children. That's a really good plan if you're trying to perpetuate your bizarre cult. Let's face facts, people: The Bible is man-made fiction.

If anyone reading this is deeply religious and seriously offended, GOOD! You are like a hypnotized kid in a cult of lies and I want to be the guy that kidnaps you and saves your mind from religion. Whether you're a Moonie, a Wiccan or a Baptist, I have bad news for you: It's all a big joke on you. Everything else that is real in this world requires tangible evidence and you have none. There's more evidence of fucking UFOs than there is that Jesus was the son of G-d, or that there even is a G-d. Damn, that G-d is annoying. Let's keep it real and tell the folks how we do it around here. So I was raping God in a bathroom stall in the Port Authority and he was crying like a little girl. MWAH ha hahahaha! I am such a fucking asshole and I can't even help it!

I have so much more bile and anger left that I promise you that I will zine until I can zine no more, Pablo.

When I run out of material, it will mean that my essence has been purged of this evil and I will be free to skip in fields of daisies and butterflies with all of the pets I've had in my life that have died. We'll sleep late, make s'mores, smoke weed, lie in a hammock, listen to Tenacious D, play *Grand Theft Auto* and I'll get a good blowjob every single time I get a boner. That will be the day, motherfucker.

JOSH SAITZ
NEW YORK CITY
2004

Even though it is a constant source of tremendous anxiety, I find the act of naming things to be both challenging and fascinating. It's very difficult to name things well, and most people are really fucking bad at it. I take naming things a little too seriously because when I've named something badly, it haunts me like a bad meal—as soon as I think the meal is finally out of my system, I burp, taste its vileness again, and I am once again reminded of my poor judgment.

For every zine out there that is named something simple, unique and clear, there are thousands of one-note in jokes, bad puns, intentional misspellings and obscure references that are lost on everyone. Even worse than those there are some, like *10 Things Jesus Wants You to Know*, which are so goddamn retarded that it forces a reader to assume that the zine's maker is institutionalized against their will. Since zines are supposed to be personal, their names ought to be as well. You don't have to know instantly what *Ten Thousand Things* refers to, but once you pick up a copy, you realize that he's numbering the pages of all the issues backward and eventually, he'll get down to one and have written ten thousand things. That's amazing, simple and perfectly appropriate, to me.

I started writing material for this zine long before I had settled on a name for the project. After two months of writing I decided that I needed a working title so I could focus on the project as an independent entity. In my head the project was always called, "TITLE—TK," which is what they do in publishing when something needs a title or headline and they'll think of it later. The TK (sometimes pronounced like "teek") is supposed to mean "to come" but I don't know why it's not TC. I am sure some smartass out there will e-mail me the answer, but I don't really care why.

When I was ready to name my baby, I made a list of possible names on a piece of paper and added new names to it whenever I thought of them. After a few weeks I had about twenty good ones to choose from. Then I would wake up in the middle

of the night and not be able to go back to sleep because I thought of another good name. I transferred the first page to my computer and then I started keeping a pad and pen next to my bed and I learned how to write in the dark. Sadly, I lost some good ones to poor penmanship. When I finally decided to name the zine *Negative Capability*, I was both delighted and relieved. To me, *Negative Capability* is fraught with profound personal meaning and a completely coincidental literary meaning that I wasn't even aware of when I picked it. The name will never seem old or dated or cheesy to me because no matter what I am writing about, I will always use my negative capability to produce *Negative Capability*. And it will always seem like MY name because it means so much to me.

After I chose that name I put the other names aside and figured I'd use some of them as titles for the essays I was writing or for stories that I would write in some distant future. Because I am mental, I kept thinking of new names. Even though my brain was fully aware that the name was carved in stone, the naming went on. I put some of the other names in an article called "OCD? Not Me!" in *Negative Capability* #2. When my friend Peter and I made our audiozine *Misfit Toys*, we recorded me reading a lot of the newer ones and some of the better ones from the original article. Then I took all the rest from all of my lists and put them up on my web page, thinking that by doing it, I would finally be able to purge myself of this endless naming.

A week after I posted the web page it started up again, so I kept writing the names down and then explained them. It went on for months, since I never stifle my creativity for fear that it might turn it off permanently. I have always been a person who writes when the mood strikes or an idea occurs to me. Some people can set appointments to sit down and write, but I can't. It's not even that I'm intimidated by a blank page, it's that I don't know what to do with blank pages. I know what to do with the ideas I get—write those fucking things down and back them up often.



It's not often that I am so self-referential that I end up analyzing why I'm analyzing myself, and I would like to just offer a friendly apology and say that I really can't help it. While it may veer too far in that direction, it can easily swing somewhere else.

I am pleased to report that the incessant naming has finally stopped. I don't know if I should thank the makers of Klonopin, the delivery guy who brings me my pot or my wife's boundless love, but I am healed, praise Lurky. Instead of saying that the obsession and compulsion to rename this zine has ended, I say that it has come full circle, to infinity. I figured it was all out of my head. I thought my brain was done with this particular exercise. But I was wrong. Writing this right now, I just thought of another name, "Selling Credibility." It sounds like *Negative Capability* and also is ironic because credibility is one thing that's never for sale. At the same time, if you got my zine, some people might think of you as being hip, or credible, when all you did was buy a fucking magazine. Please, for the love of Lurky, help me.

Starting today, and ending a few days before I wrap up this issue, I will make a small space for my own obsessive-compulsive desire to name something that's already been named and share with you, my dear reader, an explanation and exploration of each name. If my brain doesn't stop, I may just jam an ice pick into my ear until this part of my brain shuts the fuck up (this is more

of a negotiating ploy for the writer/external voice in me to deal with my brain than an actual threat, but I really, really

mean it!). I have also made sure to include many dick jokes for my readers who find the dense, wordy articles too challenging. My hero Bill Hicks would often tell his audiences that he was there to open their minds and expose them to an alternate viewpoint for the first forty-five minutes of his set but he would reward their patience with ten minutes of big, purple-veined dick jokes, and it's a tradition I will maintain in his honor.

Showgoat

My ex-friend Jay is quite a stud. I don't know if I should say "was" because he may have lost his looks; I honestly don't know. On the few occasions I've seen him get shot down by insanely hot chicks, I'm sure it wasn't his fault. He's as smooth as a gravy sandwich. He regularly gets really fine women, including a few famous ones, some strippers, hell, he even claims to have gotten some action off one of the chicks from those Robert Palmer videos. It's a common expression when you are riding around in style, to call it, "Riding around on a show pony," meaning that your ride is top of the line. One night we were talking about the hot girls that we saw in the bar and Jay said, "I'd like to ride her around like a show pony," which was really funny. Then a really heinous chick went by and I said, "You'd have to ride her like a show goat," because of her little beard and bad posture. After that, whenever we'd spot a heinous chick, we'd refer to her as a "showgoat." The phrase's etymology is from an old expression between me and my college friends. It's quite common to call an ugly girl a dog, but my friends took it a little further. If you

were chasing after a dog, you were acting like the chuck wagon in the dog food commercials. After a while, sleeping with an ugly girl wasn't "banging a dog," the girl became the wagon being chased and it became "chasing the wagon." We always used to rag on each other, saying one of us was "chasing the wagon" that night because he couldn't do any better. I thought it would be a cool name for the zine because there's no such thing as a showgoat and it's ironic because "show" in this case means pretty and "goat" means ugly and I'm a fan of oxymorons. I am also a fan of goats and my wife always wanted to get one to trim our lawn. I'd like to ride you, my friend, like the showgoat you are.



My friend John Dickstein used to mail me letters using Charles W. Agon [Chuck Wagon] as the return address, as an inside joke.

Dick's Wet

I like that this means that my dick is wet (from swimming!) but I love that it sounds like "dick sweat," because dick sweat is sexy. I also thought it would make a good name for a bar as Dick's Wetbar. Then it gets even dirtier but a lot of people wouldn't even get it, like when you hear the name "Porky Pig." You don't realize that they named a pig what they call the meat from a dead pig. I guess that the human equivalent would be to name your child "Corpse" or perhaps "Cadaver."

This is sick and wrong, not clever.

Go Fuck Yourself

I want to be taken seriously as a wordsmith but I will make almost no effort to be literary, pretentious or affected, except when I call myself a wordsmith. I just don't like to say "writer." When I think about what I am trying to say with this zine, it really comes down to one simple sentiment. I want to find that guy, you know who you are, and I want to tell him to go fuck himself. I really would like to do a zine with this name but it would upset my Mom. Actually, that's a very good reason to do it...

Ballbuster

As a vocation, I like to bust people's balls, but only those that deserve it. It's a great title because you immediately know what I'm all about and it's slightly dirty. I think I actually saw a magazine with this name but it could have been in a dream.

Powermad

I'm mad at the people who are in power. It's a common stereotype that Jews control the media, but I'm telling you, unless they're having meetings at a synagogue in one of the outer boroughs, the Jews do not, in fact, control the media. If we did, you would be reading these words in a mainstream publication instead of a dirty little zine. Giving anyone complete authority to do whatever the fuck they want only encourages them to be more powermad. Doing any kind of zine makes most people slightly powermad, but I'm handling it pretty well. Wait, do you feel abused? Shut up, asshole.

A cute goat named Babyclown says, "Baaaah!"

Lethologica

This word describes the state of not being able to remember the word you want and it has a nice sound to it. Leth-O-Log-I-Ca. Hey, buddy. Give me the last cold turkey breast, make it fast, take my ass to town. Have an open mind, send my cares away. Ring my bell, you fat pig, oh, what the hell, today's your lucky day. You, and me, and her and her and her, simultaneous. You, and me, and Winona Ryder, simultaneous lovin', baby. Thanks to Trey Parker and Isaac Hayes for the song.

You've Got a Hard Lip, Herbert

I am by no means a fan of *Star Trek* and would estimate that I've seen half of the original series, 1/10 of any of the spinoffs and exactly half the movies. When I was in college there were other people who constantly wanted to suck me into *Star Trek* but I resisted mightily and I continue to resist their bland sci-fi optimism. I'm into dystopia and *Blade Runner* has been my favorite movie since I first saw it in 1982. There was at least one original *Trek* episode that I loved called "The Way to Eden" that featured an encounter between the crew and what could be called "space hippies." They were a 60's stereotype but with futuristic hippie clothes and musical instruments. Captain Kirk is a military type and has no patience for the goddamn hippies so he tells them what to do. One of the hippies gives him the most memorable retort, "You've got a hard lip, Herbert."

Kirk doesn't understand the insult, so he asks Spock what "Herbert" means. Spock frowns and tells Kirk, "It is rather uncomplimentary. Herbert was a minor official, notorious for his rigid and limited patterns of thought." It's available free on startrek.com if you want to see a clip for yourself. That's what this zine is: Me saying to all the uptight assholes out there, "You've got a hard lip, Herbert." My friends and I still call uptight people "Herbs" many years later.

Sullen Entropy

Robyn Hitchcock once sang, "The universe is based on sullen entropy, it falls apart as it goes on," and I wholeheartedly agree. It's obscure, universal, sullen and true. If I keep quoting him, I'm going to owe him some royalties. Please try some Robyn Hitchcock today, it's good for everyone. *Jewels for Sophia* is excellent but you can also get the greatest hits CD called *Uncorrected Personality Traits*, which is a good introduction to my favorite singer.

Free Crack

Few things are more attractive to illiterates than things that are free. My zine is like crack in that it's cheap to get a hit and it's very addictive. I thought it'd be a cool title but beyond mere shock value, it would probably turn off as many people as it would turn on.

Come Correct

I like names that are simple to abbreviate and referring to a zine as CC is cool. The name is from Chris Rock's special, *Bigger and Blacker*, and he said something that my wife immediately agreed with. It's really hot, and more true than anyone wants to admit. He said something like, "Your woman is nastier than you think. She'll do anything you want, but you gotta come correct." What he means is that you can't just demand or cajole, you have to say it like a man in the right way and you can get what you want. As a zine publisher, I am trying to come at you like a fucking man, with the hope that by doing so you'll comply with my desire to make the world a smarter place.

>∞ or >&≠

The names are, in order, *Greater Than Infinity* and *Greater Than and Not Equal To*. The implication of both is that this zine, in and of itself, is not only so great that it can't be quantified, but it has no known equal. This may have been the most arrogant of all the titles I came up with and while it's cool to give something a name that's all symbols, it's even too arrogant for me. Stop shaking your fucking head and mocking me. How dare you, sir!

Die, Hippie

It's a nice commanding name and would go right for the people that I want to attack most, the dirty, smelly, hippies. Someone else actually suggested this name to me but I added the comma and changed the spelling from "Hippy" because I pictured a woman with wide hips instead of a dirty bum. I lived on Haight Street in San Francisco for longer than I should have and every time I would walk to a store up the street, there would be a gauntlet of hippies all splayed out on the sidewalk with their dirty friends and their dirty pets and their dirty music. I hated them so passionately that I would wish cancer on them as I passed by. It wasn't even so much that they were lazy and smelly as that they would actually beg for money to buy shit only working people deserve, like drugs. A few times someone said to me, "Dude, can you spare a dollar so I can get a hit of acid?" As Bill Hicks said after a similar confrontation, "These people want me to give them the hard-earned money that my folks send me every week? I mean, the nerve! My dad works ten hours a day to send me this money and you want me to just give it to you? Get a job, you leech!"

Heroic Dose

Whenever someone dies of a drug overdose, I always wonder what the hell they were thinking. I mean, I've taken a lot of drugs (see "Lost in the K-Hole" in *NegCap* #3), and oftentimes I've taken what would be considered too much of everything all at once. Unlike the people who OD, once I'm on drugs, my ability to determine how much is too much remains intact. I've always wondered how people are able to completely allow themselves to lose contact with reality. One of the many reasons that I enjoy taking too many drugs is because I'm sick of the voices in my head. It's only when high that I'm not tormented by intrusive voices, but I'm so rarely ever able to completely detach from reality that I keep on trying. I've always wanted to take a heroic dose and lose contact with reality permanently, so I could rediscover the world.

Pedophile Parade

Who doesn't want to go with some friends to throw eggs at a pedophile parade?



The evil, crafty and dangerous "Space Hippies" encounter the crew of the Starship Enterprise wearing high-tech "space scrunchies" in their hair. The men are wearing a futuristic suspenders-and-bike-short combo unitard in flirty tie-dye print.



Unimpeachable

This name has always seemed so strong to me, like it's a declaration rather than a title. I've read a few zines where I got the distinct impression that the editor was just full of shit and saying things that they made up or worse, that they didn't believe. There are many zines that fudge the truth for effect, but I'd just like to mention, briefly, that Jeff Kay of the *West Virginia Surf Report* is a lying, unfunny, boring piece of shit and I sincerely hope that he stops publishing because it's fucking pathetic. A fat, greasy, effeminate man approaching middle age, living in the boondocks, making up stupid stories that never happened to anyone. I mean, come on! What a fucking loser! I sure know how to win friends and influence people, don't I? I believe in everything that I'm writing and even though I will exaggerate for comic effect from time to time, I wouldn't have put it in the zine if I hadn't had that exact thought at one time or another. I won't lie to you, pal. I may veer away from the truth for a second but I'll always try to let you in on the joke because that's the best way to do things. All my jokes are for you, not on you, like Mr. Kay's. If you have no idea who or what I am talking about, you're in the lucky majority who've managed to avoid Jeff Kay's stupid, pointless garbage. Hey Jeff, I warned you to keep your mouth shut about me, didn't I, you stupid, lame, ugly peckerhead? Now do us both a favor and stay dead.

Conspiracy of One

I like to think of this zine as being part of a vast underground conspiracy to undermine ridiculous religious beliefs, retarded superstitions and all

manner of idiocy. In a sense it is a conspiracy because I'm taking everything I've learned from others and everything I know from personal experience and putting it all together to make a zine that will try to make people question some things that they've long taken for granted. The thing is, it's just me doing this zine. Sure, I'll have a little help from friends from time to time, but in the end, really, it's a Conspiracy of One, which has a really nice ring to it. A year after I wrote this one down, the Army began an advertising campaign featuring the tag line, "An Army of One." It made me want to say as clearly as possible that anyone that joins the military should stop asking to be pat on the back for taking a shitty job where they have to kill people or get killed. It's a bad job, just like any other, and I don't expect medals and monuments for a well written zine or an attractive penis, so don't go waving your flag and asking me to pat you on the back because I don't give a shit about the military. I think they waste more of our tax dollars and are the cause of more misery in the world than the IRS, cancer, hunting and Jackie Chan combined.

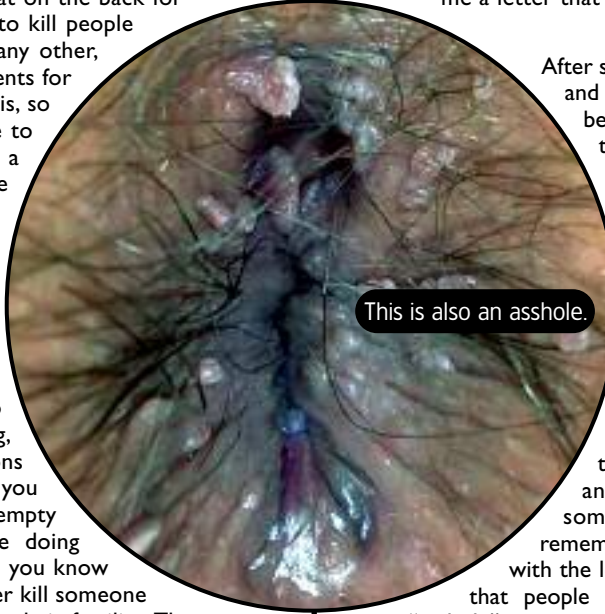
I try to avoid politics as much as possible, but I want to go on record as saying that I am, and have always been, against the troops. I don't want anything bad to happen to them, but I want them to know that what they are doing is wrong, they are doing it for all the wrong reasons and it needs to stop. The rest of you retarded yahoos can keep making empty gestures so you can feel like you're doing something to support the troops. Do you know what the troops really want? To either kill someone that threatens us or come home to their families. They don't want to secure oil wells so our president's friends can get richer while we get to pay the bill in more ways than one. With the notable exception of World War II, I cannot think of a single instance of our military doing anything good, right, moral or noble. I would never volunteer to kill anyone that a retard who stole an election told me to kill. I think if you volunteer to kill, you are volunteering to die. I also think that for the good of mankind, we as a species need to rid ourselves of the most violent and most easily influenced by propaganda by sending them to kill poor people. It reduces the population, takes

a lot of these violent thugs out of the gene pool permanently and it gives us all something to talk about. I am so fucking sick of veterans asking to be thanked or for new memorials. Yeah, we all did what we were supposed to, what more do you want? A cookie? If I just upset you and you are running for a crayon to send me some hate mail, don't waste your fucking time. You want to do something good for this country? Stop wasting gasoline with your car, spay your pets and tell your spoiled, bratty kids to shut the fuck up in the movies. That will do more good than sending me a letter that I'll goof on and then throw away.

Among Assholes

After spending \$18,000 on market research and polling, the powers that be at this zine began a formal search for a perfect name that would be both eye-catching and memorable. As the committee refined its search, we realized that if you want to place high on lists, especially alphabetical ones, you need to have a name that starts with the letter "a." It also helps to have a simple acronym that's easy to remember, especially if that acronym is part of the public consciousness already. As a result, it was determined through a series of strategy meetings and focus groups, that the name of Mr. Joshua Saitz's angry and authoritative zine should be something cutting edge, easy to remember, pithy and of course, it must start with the letter "a." Further research revealed that people have come to accept the term "asshole" as not so much a curse as a term of extreme distaste. Since the author of this zine seems to think he deals with assholes all day, he is "Among Assholes," though he feels untainted by the association. The acronym of "AA" was felt to have a high Q rating, positive public associations and it was easy to remember, so that was the name the committee moved forward with. After putting together a slideshow presentation complete with charts, the committee proposed the new name to Jøsh. He said that he already had a name for his zine and that we had wasted our time. What an asshole.

This is also an asshole.



Contempt

I have complete contempt for every fucking one of you people out there! You goddamn little pissants. How dare you! You are welcome to this name.

Smegma Lipgloss

Is there anything more foul than an uncircumcised penis? Even though lately I've heard that circumcision isn't necessary, my wife has a different perspective. Because I'm a Jew, I'm circumcised. As a woman, my wife is repulsed by foreskins and smegma and all of the associated gross, unclean ways. My wife says unequivocally that she wouldn't orally please anyone with a foreskin and I'm sure she's not alone in feeling that way. If we have a son, we have to get him circumcised for one simple reason. I would die of misery and sadness if I didn't get that kind of oral action, so my son would be similarly inclined, right? I would never do anything that would decrease my son's chance of getting head, so the boy's gonna get clipped so he can get blown, dig? I don't want my daughter-in-law walking around all smeared up with smegma lipgloss. I also like that the name in and of itself is incredibly crass, disgusting and offensive, yet there are no dirty words and it has a nice "title-ish" ring to it. If I ever direct a porno with uncircumcised men, I have a title waiting.

I Want to Fuck Milla Jovovich

This isn't really a title as much as it is a declaration of fact. I figured if I made this the name of my zine I might actually have a shot at fucking her because my wife would have to understand.

I mean, that's the name of my zine, honey, I have to fuck her for the fans!

Lick My:

I thought it would be funny because dumb people would think that I hadn't specified what I wanted licked, but smart people would read it the right way, "Lick My Colon." Why is that funny? I dunno, it just is. Don't agree? Then please, by all means, lick my colon.

Pimp Hand Strong

I hope it sounds deliciously obscure to you because it's pretty simple. I used to really dislike Snoop Dogg, not just because his name is stupid but also because I find it irritating when illiterates get rich endorsing violence and drugs. When I first met Juli she said that she liked Snoop and it was something that bothered me for a long time. But, and here's the point, he was on Howard Stern's radio show and not only is he a funny dude, he isn't nearly the asshole I'd pegged him as. He was happily married with kids and he said that he smoked an ounce of weed every single day. During the interview, he said that even though he was married he still had some bitches on the side who got him stuff. "Like what?" Howard asked. "You know, sometimes they bring me money, or weed, or just a beer." And why do they do such things? Because, Snoop explained, his pimp hand was very strong. What better way to show the world your silent authority than to have a stable of bitches who bring you shit merely because your pimp hand is too strong for them? That's awesome. I also am a huge fan of cover songs (See "Cover This" in *NegCap* #1) and I have an amazing country-bluegrass cover of Snoop's "Gin and Juice" done by a band called Gourd. I also have a great cover Snoop did of Queen's "We Will Rock You," and I think everyone should go to my web site right now, read about my cover song CDs and trade with me—I collect cover songs voraciously and always want more.

I'm An Architect

One of my favorite lines from *Seinfeld* comes from George Costanza. He's supposed to think of a good reason why he's waiting in a woman's building with Jerry. He wants so badly to be able to say that he's an architect, like it's his only unfulfilled dream. It's the ultimate pretentious lie, which is not what this zine is. Well, maybe a little.

Cocky Prick

I am sometimes pretty arrogant, especially when I write. I certainly have flickers of self-doubt and moments where I think I suck at everything. It's not that I'm overcompensating for any perceived shortcomings, but I thought it was bad if you had low self-esteem, so why is it also bad to have high self-esteem? They say that the more confident you are, the less you care what others think of you and the less confident you are, the more you care what others think of you. I don't give half a fuck what anyone thinks of me except my wife—and she loves me. It's a personal failing, but certainly not fatal. The idea that I'm a cocky prick, which I am, and that the name is essentially "dicky dick" is perfect for me because it's all about dicks without saying the word, yo.

Ultraoxymoron

One night I couldn't sleep and I decided to sit in the bathroom and read so as not to disturb my sleeping bug. While sitting there, I looked at my wedding band and realized that it's the dumbest thing ever. My wife's engagement ring is in platinum because that's what she wanted and I love her more than life itself. When it came time to buy our wedding bands, we went to Fortunoff because we hate the ripoff Jews in the diamond district, and I can say that because I am Jewish, so to all of you offended yids, I say, Don't be a schmuck and take a joke. It wouldn't be funny if it weren't true. The saleslady at Fortunoff convinced us that we didn't need the bands in platinum because it was a waste of money. In fact, the same exact rings that we wanted in platinum were five times more than comparable bands in white gold. Obviously, we got the white gold. The fucked up thing is that the white gold actually looks silver. But why is it called *white gold*, which is obviously an oxymoron, when it's actually *silver*? I have no idea. Imagine if something called *blue red* was actually *green*. That would make it an ultraoxymoron, dontcha think? This is more of a sniglet than a name for my zine, but it would be a cool name for a band.



Milla Jovovich is a bad actress and singer but I would kill babies if I had to, just to fuck her once.
Please, Milla...



Fuzznut

Any dog that is fuzzy and cute is a fuzznut. A fuzznut is also, in a broader sense, a term I use for anything cute and cuddly, like my zine and my lovely wife. Hi, bug! Doodler is a fuzznut, to me!

Punctured Testicle

Goddamn, just typing that made me cringe. I want everyone in the world to cringe when they see me coming. For men, there are few things more terrifying than the idea of a punctured testicle.

Men Are From Mars, Come Kiss My Penis

Do I really have to explain this one? I know it's too long and the reference is dated, but I thought of it all by myself and it would make a funny title for a country song.

Black Tards with Tourette's

I've got a foul mouth and quite often people feel the need to either rebuke me or frown with disapproval. Those people are a bunch of fucking dicks. I was trying to think of a person who could curse, say racist shit and be above reproach, and the answer I came up with was a black retard who had Tourette's Syndrome. Because of what they are, you'd allow them to call anyone any horrible name and you'd never criticize or bother them about it. Unfortunately, I'm a white smartass with an attitude problem, which, as a title, is less catchy than "Black Tards with Tourette's."

Kismet

Do you feel like it's a good thing that you have found this zine? I hope so. I think it's a great thing that you have this zine, even if you've stolen it. I don't care if you steal this zine because then the stores can't return them and I still get paid. My point is that I am glad you're here about as much as you're glad you're here, and that's kismet. We were meant to find each other. When I was in grad school, I used to watch *Mystery Science Theater 3000* by myself because I was a lonely, nerdy guy who was barely employed and had few friends. I really know how to smooth in the revelations, huh? The show was great because it was like watching a bad movie with some of your funniest friends. To some people, it's just a stupid idea and not very well executed. But to me, it's hilarious and they often made such amazingly obscure references that every time I got one, I felt like these guys knew me and were just like me. Anyway, Joel, the creator and original host of the show, was interviewed about who he thought would like his show and he said, "I never thought everyone would get the show, but I always knew the *right people* would get it." He was talking about me, and in a way, he was talking about my zine, and once again, he's talking about us, and it's kismet.

Tartan Trousers

My wife and I really enjoyed the movie *The Big Tease*. It's a very silly mockumentary about a fey Scottish hairdresser who goes to LA to enter a big hair-styling competition. It's really funny because it's so light and enthusiastic, you know? It stars Craig Ferguson, who is on Drew Carey's show, but I've only seen that show twice in my life. There's a great scene where he calls his boyfriend, Gareth, back in Scotland and says, "I'm wearing my tartan trousers and I feel *sexy*!" in this great Scottish accent, and I thought, Wouldn't it be cool if just a pair of pants could make you feel sexy? I want this zine to make you feel sexy because you are so fucking hot! Thanks for reading this far, you little minkie!

Acid Tongue

Many cable providers offer subscribers an on-screen guide that gives information about the shows. In New York, the info given is always specific to the episode, but when I lived in San Francisco we had

Here's Craig Ferguson in his tartan trousers and matching tartan jacket.



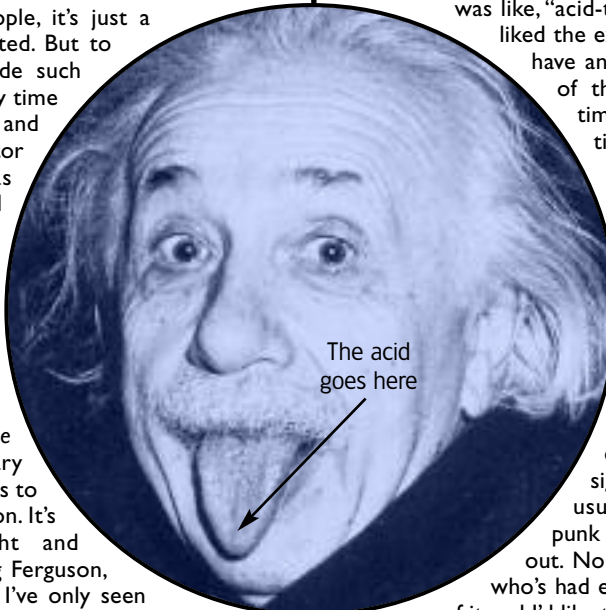
Retarded Hesh

A hesh is a guy who wears ¾ sleeve rock T-shirts, drives an El Camino, has a mullet and/or a bleached tail/braid and thinks that Judas Priest really does have magical powers. This guy in the picture is John Tormey, a retarded hesh who got drunk at my apartment, sat on my lizard and broke its tail off. I rushed Godzilla to the animal hospital after midnight, they had to amputate his tail, and then he died a few days later. John is a fucking asshole.

satellite and the info in the guide was about the whole series. So, where the NY system might give info on an upcoming *Simpsons* as, "Bart buys an abandoned factory and Homer enters a chili cookoff," on the satellite it would say about the same episode, "Animated adventures of the Springfield family." That information is just about useless, right? But whoever's doing the information surprises me occasionally by writing something insightful instead of insipid. For a *Dennis Miller* rerun, the information said, "The acid-tongued comedian greets a variety of actors and performers." I was like, "acid-tongued"? What the fuck? I really liked the expression and I realized that I also have an acid tongue, but whenever I think of the phrase, I always remember the times when I've taken acid. Every single time, I would inform people that I had taken acid by showing them my tongue with the blotter hit on the end, sort of visually demonstrating my "acid tongue." That's the best I can do.

Anti-Whore

I am very against people who sell themselves because anyone who has a price has no value. That's my lone attempt at being profound. I also don't like slutty people because fucking everyone indiscriminately is usually a sign of mental illness. The thing that usually characterizes zines, especially punk zines, is their obsession with selling out. No one wants to do it, but everyone who's had even a small success must be guilty of it and I'd like to make a point about this. To me, selling out means doing something you wouldn't ordinarily do, or changing something that you really believe in to get to a goal that's either purely material, anti-intellectual, or just plain crass. By my own definition, in order for me to sell out, I'd have to take an article I've written and yank all of the teeth out of it, just to get it published in a piece of shit like *Details*. But, if I should write a piece for some other magazine, and it's true and accurate and honest, then it doesn't matter what the market is, it only matters what my motive is. My motives for writing should always be the same:



produce
good work, get my ideas out there,
make some contacts, piss off hypersensitive
people and entertain everyone else. That's all I'm after
and as long as I keep it real to myself, it will always be real to
you as my audience. So let's keep it real, because I'm keeping it real.

Piss Shivers / Pee Chills

There have actually been scientific studies done to solve the mystery of the piss shivers. For any woman who reads this zine, piss shivers are what sometimes happen to men after they pee. For many men, after their bladder is nearly empty, they will be hit by an uncontrollable shudder. The studies never figured out why it happens, but I can assure you that it does happen. I told my wife about it and she thought it was both bizarre and fascinating, like all things about the male anatomy and psyche. I was in the bathroom once, I was hit with some wicked piss shivers and I must have made some kind of noise. My wife heard me and asked, "Did you just get the Pee Chills?" I think my wife is so adorable when she gets the name wrong in a cute way like that and ever since, I've decided to honor her by calling them the "Pee Chills." Pee chills are different from douche chills because you get douche chills from others and you get pee chills from deep inside your body.

Everything Sucks

Sure, I'm a cynical bastard, but with good reason. I like this as a name for a zine because it's very simple, direct, to-the-point and true. The problem is, my zine doesn't suck so the title isn't 100% true, right?

Jøsh

As arrogant as I may be, there is no way I would name the zine, my web site, my children or anything else after me. I know that there is only one me in the whole world, therefore I should be the only one with the name. I am putting this non-name in the list because I wanted to address a distressing trend in this country—people giving their kids stupid names. I know everyone wants their kid to be unique but let them establish that fact by accomplishment, not by the spelling of their name. My given name is Joshua David Saitz but I never go by my initials, my middle name or even my full name. I'm just Jøsh, and the ø is a tribute to my late grandfather. I started spelling my name that way the day after he died and only my friends can use it.

Firecracker Suicide

I read this hilarious and tragic news story that would fall under the heading of "Very Odd." There was a nice but lonely guy who was very distraught about the way that his life had turned out and felt that he had no choice but to end it all. His method was most unusual in that, in his pit of sadness, he felt the strongest possible statement could be made by placing a very large firecracker into his mouth and lighting it. Unfortunately, some people's lives are hideous precisely because they do not deserve better. This man, as you might expect, merely blew off his jaw and destroyed his face and now lives his sad, ugly, depressed life writing down his story of attempted firecracker suicide on a Magic Erase board. And why does he have to explain it that way, you may ask. Good question. As I've said, he no longer has a mouth to speak of and can now only communicate through the written word. And what does this have to do with me? *I am that man* and it's the saddest life in the whole world. That's what the zine should have been called, to remind me every day about the time I tried to commit firecracker suicide and instead I'm stuck in this world as a mutilated freak that is mocked by everyone who hears my story. Oh, I'm just fucking with you. I didn't try to commit suicide that way! I was a man about it and I shot myself in the head on TV, just like R. Budd Dwyer. Actually, I just think it's a funny name and a really stupid way to try to kill yourself.

On Purpose

I think this would be a good place to give this premise a rest. A lot of people have commented about me and this zine and I have printed some of those quotes in the front of this zine with the hope that the endorsements will spur sales. I have no problem plastering every kind word ever written about this zine all over my web site because it's one of the more gratifying aspects of this project. In that sense, I may be a bit of a huckster, but I feel that the product I am offering is worthwhile and I must oversell it because I want as many people to read this as possible. So, that fact, and every other thing about this zine, is done with a very specific purpose. Everything is intentional, everything is on purpose. Even if you don't notice or care about the minor details, the reason that it takes so damn long to produce each issue of this zine is because it takes so damn long to produce each issue of this zine. Every issue has to say everything I want to say, in precisely the way I want to say it, on pages that look precisely the way I want them to look. I am not a perfectionist at all, but I am very specific about what I want. And right now, I want to stop thinking of names for my zine for the rest of my life.

Mr. Julibug

My wife is the cutest thing in the world and she always has been. Even when she is sleeping she raises her little fist in anger. She's not just Mrs. Saitz, I am proud to say that I'm Mr. Julibug.

After my wife and I moved to San Francisco in 1999, I made a concerted effort to try new things and more importantly, I tried to change the things in my life that bothered me. I guess I finally realized that complaining wasn't really going to change anything. I also learned that making changes to effect meaningful growth is good, changing everything just to see what happens is bad.

It all began with a chance encounter with the Learning Annex, which is a national company that sponsors lectures and classes on all kinds of subjects. They can teach you how to use Photoshop, how to tango, or even how to write a best-selling novel in two days using only a book of matches and a jar of fire ants.

They have magazine boxes all over major cities touting their classes and since the catalog is free, people often read it while waiting for a bus or doing laundry.

I was doing laundry by myself one afternoon and I picked it up because James Van Praagh was on the cover and I find him fascinating. If you know who he is, you may already be wondering why a skeptical cynic like me would even give this guy a second of my time. If you don't know who he is, let me tell you. James Van Praagh says that he is a medium. In more practical terms, he is like the character Cole Sear in *The Sixth Sense* and he saw dead people before Haley Joel Osment was born. He was doing it before John Edward and now he does a terrible TV show called *Beyond with James Van Praagh*. In 2000, when I saw this Learning Annex catalog, he was still relatively unknown outside the lunatic fringe.

The first time that I ever saw him was many years ago, on a TV newsmagazine, where a cynical reporter interviewed James in an attempt to expose him as a fraud. I love shows like that, especially when the subject squirms and looks guilty as hell. James didn't look or sound guilty at all, in fact, he seemed like such a sweet, sincere guy that I wanted to know more about him. The reporter made repeated attempts to trip him up or make him look like a scam artist but James always maintained his cool. For me, the moment that made all the difference was when the reporter frowned and asked James how much he charges for a private session. James smiled and said that he does a lot of work for free, but when he sees people in his home he charges a flat fee. The reporter did the mandatory, "How shocking!" look at the camera and then James said something like, "No one ever asks a singer why they get paid to sing, or a dancer why they get paid to dance. This is what I am good at, this is

where my talents are and I have devoted my life to it." It was like he was saying that he was doing it for the money, but not just for the money, he also doing it because it was one of the few things he was good at, something I can easily relate to.

I don't believe in God, reincarnation or ghosts. Not even a little. Every time I see a psychic, healer or possessed person, I think it can all be explained as hoaxes or some kind of mental illness. But James Van Praagh is spooky because not only is he well known and respected by scientists and the police, he also doesn't have any of the hallmarks of a fraud. He also comes across as what gay guys call a "hairy bear," which is an overweight and hairy gay guy. I don't know if he's gay, but he seems like it. Let's just say he's gentle and leave it at that.

Over the course of the next few years, I saw him on TV a number of times and it struck me that there are only two possible logical explanations for what he does. The first explanation

is that he's a big fucking fraud and he's doing what they call "cold reading" where he throws out lots of vague and general info and

when he gets a hit from the person he is reading, he reads their body language to make up the rest of what he's saying. This is a good theory, but when I saw

him on TV, the things he was saying were not vague or general. He would say,

"The person coming through to me says that he's your son, his name is Matthew and he says he accidentally died of a drug overdose on a beach four years ago." At this point, the person being read will either shit themselves or begin to cry. The second possible explanation is that the people he is reading are in on it and either agree with everything Van Praagh says or act like they do. I think this theory can be discounted for one obvious reason: If

Van Praagh was a complete fraud and the people he reads are in on it, at some point one of the thousands of people he has read would have come forward to say that they were in on it. As far as I know, this has never happened. The last variation on this second possible explanation is the most cynical of all, and that is that Van Praagh, or agents working for him, use hidden microphones, pre-interviews, hidden cameras and other tricks to get just enough information to make a reasonable reading.

The only other explanation that makes any sense to me is not logical at all: What he's saying is true and that when your body dies, your consciousness lives on and remains connected to the people you love. This goes against everything I've said and believed since I was thrown out of Hebrew school. When I am confronted with something of this nature, I often find that the simplest explanation is the most likely. So I am left thinking he's either a fraud or a medium. I want to believe both, but I don't think both can be true. Since I have no evidence that he's a fraud, I'm left hoping he's real and that I'll never be separated from my wife, even after death. If I'm wrong, retarded and gullible, at least I can kid myself that if I should

A Date with **Al Goldstein**

die before my wife, I can still see her and be with her and I know it's a great comfort to her to think that we'll always be together.

The way that I explain it to myself is by using a metaphor and logic. Whatever it is that makes me who and what I am is manifested right now in my physical body. If I was sealed in an airtight barrel and dumped into the ocean, every single thing that makes me who I am would still be there, but after a few minutes of suffocation, I would die and my body would no longer be who I am. I think of that thing that makes me who I am as some kind of energy, maybe you want to call it a soul or a life force. I know from my study of physics that energy can neither be created nor destroyed, just transformed from one form to another. The metaphor I use is a glass of water. The water is what makes me who I am, the glass is my body that contains it. You can smash the glass and the water will spill all over the place, but it won't be destroyed. You can leave the glass out and eventually all the water will evaporate, but it's still not destroyed. You can heat the glass and the water until there's nothing left in the glass, but the water molecules will still exist. They may be in a form that we can't see or measure, but the water molecules still exist in a real way.

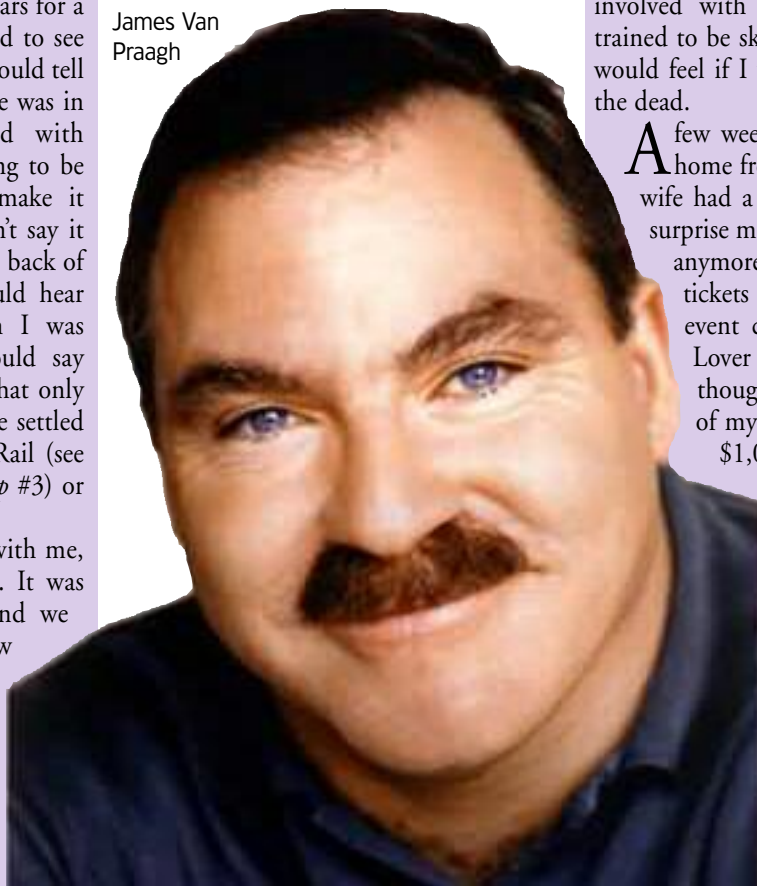
I brought home the Learning Annex catalog and showed it to my wife. She was shocked that I believed any of this stuff and thought it was pretty stupid. James Van Praagh was going to be doing seminars for a few days in San Francisco and I had to see him for myself. I wanted to see if I could tell if he was full of shit, if the audience was in on it, if the place was rigged with microphones and if there were going to be any major blunders that would make it obvious that he was a fraud. I didn't say it out loud or even think it, but in the back of my head I hoped that James would hear from my father, who died when I was fifteen. I hoped that my dad would say something to me, through James, that only me and my dad knew. I would have settled for hearing from my friend Greg Rail (see "Greg Rail Is My Friend" in *NegCap* #3) or my grandfather Knute.

Juli agreed to go to the seminar with me, so we ordered tickets and went. It was held in a huge hall downtown and we thought it was going to be a few dozen New Age knuckleheads and hippies, some regular people and cynics like me. I was wrong. There were hundreds and hundreds of

people lined up outside an hour before they even opened the doors. Most of the people looked pretty normal, though I did detect the stench of patchouli oil and see a few too many crystal necklaces.

James came out and did about an hour on his life story, including his reluctance to believe what was happening to his work with the police. I thought it was pretty interesting, but I could tell the audience was getting antsy for him to do readings. Before *Crossing Over*, the only place anyone could get a reading was in a private session or at one of these events. I am sure that John Edward got a TV show because someone came to one of his live events and was so amazed that they had to give him a show. When James started to do the readings it was just like the ones you see on TV. He would start talking about a dead person and then describe very specific circumstances surrounding their death. The person he was reading would recognize the information and stand up. Seeing it live is a different experience and I can tell you that James was right on the money with obscure info more than 90% of the time. He elicited gasps, tears and laughter in equal measure and I think everyone was duly impressed. I didn't get a reading but it didn't bother me. When I left the auditorium, I felt really peaceful and at the time I couldn't figure out why. Now that I am writing about it, I think it's because all the people that did get readings really needed to get one last communication, even if it was fake, to help

James Van
Praagh



heal. Being around that healing and sincere joy had a positive effect on me. I don't know if my dad can see me, read this zine or hear my thoughts at all, but I like to think he's happy for me, proud of what I've become and in a place where he can feel my love.

In 2002, they made a movie about James Van Praagh starring Ted Danson called *Living with the Dead*. My wife and I watched it thinking it would be a shitty made-for-TV movie, but it was actually spooky and a little moving. The special effects were cheesy, but the story is based on Van Praagh's life and was both compelling and convincing. The story was basically about how personal loss forced James to confront his own fears and deal with life on his own. As he realizes that the dead are trying to communicate with him, he does everything he can to deny it, ignore it and shut it off. When a dead little boy persists in haunting him, he goes to the police, which sparks an investigation. It turns out that the information James got from the boy was accurate and that he had been murdered along with a few other young boys. It takes a few clichéd turns along the way but I know from my own research that the police have often used Van Praagh to gather evidence in unsolved cases and even they cannot explain how James gets his information. My feeling is that if he was just a cynic after the money, he wouldn't bother with the police, he would use his "ability" to rip off suckers for cash. I think a fraud would be too scared of being exposed to get involved with the police because they're trained to be skeptical. At least that's how I would feel if I were pretending to speak to the dead.

A few weeks after the seminar I came home from work and I could tell my wife had a secret. She was planning to surprise me but couldn't contain herself anymore. In an envelope were three tickets to a new Learning Annex event called, "How to Drive Your Lover Wild in Bed." At first I thought it was insulting because all of my clients say I'm the best fuck \$1,000 can buy, but then I saw who was doing the seminar: Al Goldstein.

Since I've lived in New York City for most of my adult life, I've become intimately familiar with Al Goldstein, even using him in a trivia question in *NegCap* #2. I know that this zine will travel to

places that I will never go so I want to tell you a little about Al so you have some background. Al is a notorious pornographer and calls himself the "editor" of a very sleazy newspaper in NYC called *Screw Magazine*. It is ironic that a newspaper is called a magazine, but it is even more ironic that Al is called an editor since his only notable attribute is his boundless appetite. In *Screw*, the pictures are horrible, the writing is worse and it's printed on newsprint, which I am morally opposed to under any circumstances. The only things I really like in *Screw* are the ad parodies because he just takes regular ads and makes the words dirty, or he adds a penis and calls it a joke. For example, they did a parody of the *Tomb Raider* movie ad called "Womb Raider" where they added a picture of Al with his tongue out in front of Angelina Jolie so it looked like he was eating her out.

Al is also the host and creator of the longest running public access show in history, *Midnight Blue*. The show follows a very simple format: Al rants about the people who have ripped him off, done him wrong or tried to do something to hurt him and then he wheezes, "**FUCK YOU!**" and prints their home address and phone number; he interviews porn stars about how they like to have their pussies eaten and how long they have been in "the business" before he tries to guilt them into fucking him; he begs his viewers to hook him up with very specific, high-end electronic equipment at wholesale prices; he has dozens of different ads for various phone sex lines and escort services—in essence, he acts as the world's only televised pimp; and finally, there are various ad parodies. The show is always poorly shot, disorganized and hilarious yet I think it's one of the best public access shows around because it's so incredibly consistent. He has been sued, arrested, harassed, mocked and he's even been parodied on *Saturday Night Live* by Danny DeVito. But every week he sits in front of his beaten American flag, wheezing through a tracheotomy tube in his throat, wearing an ostrich-leather vest and chomping on a wet cigar while his massive gut obscures his entire lower half from his vision. In his "Fuck You" segments, he is the king of the world and will spend five minutes screaming and cursing at the CEO of a major airline because they wouldn't bump him up to first class before finally flipping off the camera and giving out the CEO's private phone number.

Sushi, tennis, computers, modeling, hiking, direct mail, speed reading, stained glass, how to find a lover, marketing, make-up, skin care, sailing, dancing, hot air ballooning, stress management, weight control, chinese cooking, biofeedback, etc.

The Learning Annex

The people who make learning easier.

Here's my wife's receipt from the event, the Learning Annex equivalent of a concert ticket that proves that I was there.

COURSE: #0025SF - REPRINT - How to Drive Your Lover Wild in Bed

TEACHER: SCREW MAGAZINE'S AL GULDSTEIN

LOCATION: You will be contacted by mail or telephone with the final class location.

Student#: 102040 R 273211

Card: \$30.00

Check: \$0.00

Reg Fee: \$0.00

Cert: \$0.00

VIP: \$0.00

Early Sign Up:

Handling: \$0.00

Course: \$30.00

TIMES: Section A: Wednesday, April 11 at 08:30 PM to 09:30 PM

In NYC, Al is a minor celebrity and he's been on many talk shows to either defend pornography or brag about how many times he has been arrested. He's been on *Howard Stern* to evaluate women, he's been on panel discussions and he once debated Pat Buchanan on the topic of masturbation. When Al runs the clips on *Midnight Blue*, he intercuts Buchanan's responses with footage of Hitler shouting in German, which is always creepy. He's a self-described fat, diabetic old Jew who can't get it up.

I really don't know what story he told the people at the Learning Annex, but he is about the least-qualified sex instructor in the world. He has been married a few times and each wife took him to the cleaners financially. His rants against them could fill a thousand DVDs, and if I had a nickel for every time he called one of them a cunt on his show, I would have enough money to spend a solid month on one of the phone sex lines on his show, 976-PEEE (where the extra "E" is for extra pee!). If he knew anything about how to please a woman, he would be fucking a woman, not giving a seminar. I had no idea what he was going to do but the seminar was supposed to run for three hours. Juli had also gotten a third ticket for our best friend, Natasha. At the time, Natasha was very shy about sex but she can talk a good game and thought it would be a fun thing to do.

Unlike James Van Praagh, Al was booked into a tiny conference room that had seven or eight rows of chairs. We sat in the

back and when Al showed up sucking on an unlit cigar and schlepping a big bag of props, we all thought we were in for some rip-roarin' Carrot Top-style prop comedy.

Al sat at his provided table and began passing out free copies of *Screw* as well as a one-shot called *The Starr Report*. He used Monica Lewinsky and Bill Clinton's heads on porn stars to recreate the testimony from Ken Starr's report. It was completely sick and perverted but I wish I'd thought of it first. In the audience of about 40 people were a lot of creepy single guys and girls, a couple of very outgoing black girls and me, my wife and Natasha in the back row. Al started his presentation by telling us that he doesn't know anything about pleasing a lover because he's terrible in bed. He said that if it weren't for Viagra he would be having no sex at all. He said he had a Japanese dominatrix girlfriend in New York who would beat him but not fuck him, so he was technically available to sleep with anyone in the audience. He turned to one of the black girls and said, "Black girls don't like to suck cock, right? They don't mind getting their pussies eaten but they won't suck cock." The girl would've blushed but instead said that she "liked oral sex."

An older woman walked into the room and asked if this was where the seminar was being held. Al sat up and said that it was. She politely asked, "Which seminar?" Al replied, "How to Eat Pussy and Suck Cock." The woman looked absolutely mortified, turned right around and walked straight out.

Across the hall was a different Learning Annex seminar about knitting.

Al moved to another woman and asked her how she liked to have her pussy eaten. Then he said that in his apartment in Los Angeles he has the bottom half of a duck mounted on the ceiling of his bedroom so that women have something to look at while he eats them out. The only thing Al likes to eat more than pussy is any kind of food ever made. When he broke out some dildos to pass around, the mood lightened up and all of the "students" started laughing and interacting with each other. He took a video out of his briefcase because he said that he needed to take a break from talking. I can't imagine being so fat that you have to take a break from talking, but whatever.com. He put the tape in, hit play and nothing happened. He flipped the channels. He hit some buttons on the VCR. Nothing worked. He said to all of us, "I'm sorry, but Jews are terrible at working electronic equipment." I said, "I'm a Jew and I can fix that easily." He said, "Come up here and do it then, you fuckin' faggot."

I went to the front of the room, rewound the tape to the beginning, hit the input select on the front on the TV and suddenly we had a video of Al doing a porno with his best friend, porn star Ron Jeremy. Al looked relieved and began telling us how he had invested some money in a brothel and liked being a pimp. Al's clip reel included one of his own original videos, a two-part series called "How to Eat Pussy" and "How to Get Your Cock Sucked." Both videos featured Ron demonstrating the sex acts and giving instructions while Al sat on the bed, looking at them like a lecherous walrus. Then the clip reel ran through Al's appearances on TV shows, including a clip of him on Ronald Reagan Jr.'s short-lived talk show. When people started to murmur with boredom, he stopped the tape, turned the lights back on and returned to his presentation.

He took out a new kind of vibrator called the Tongue that wiggles instead of vibrating, but he couldn't get the thing to work. He immediately called me up to make it work, which is the story of my entire life, I swear. I reversed the batteries and suddenly it worked again. When I returned to my seat, he decided it was time for a little audience participation. He wanted to know what my boyfriend was like and how many guys I could fuck in one day. I told him I was married and then my wife started ducking down. "What's your wife's name?"

"Juli," I said. Then he turned to Juli and asked her, "Why did you marry a faggot?" She said that I wasn't gay and that I was a good husband. Then Al noticed Natasha. "Who is your friend?"

"That's Natasha, she's our best friend."

"How do you like to have your pussy eaten, Natasha?" Al wanted to know. "Do you like it slow or do you like it when a guy is really aggressive?"

Natasha turned bright pink and said, "I don't know." Al wouldn't let up. He hounded her about her sex life and was shocked when she said she didn't have a boyfriend. Then he went on to tell all of us what he would like to do to Natasha if he was her boyfriend. After a while he realized he wasn't getting the response he wanted and returned to his presentation. For the rest of his "lecture," whenever he was describing some sex act, an ex-lover, a porn star or a weird position, he would find some way to reference me as a gay participant or Natasha as his willing lover. By the end of his presentation everyone was laughing and having a good time. Natasha had brought a camera with her and wanted a picture of Al to remember the evening. She didn't want to ask him herself because she was afraid that he was going to cop a feel.

As the event broke up a few people approached Al to talk to him. He seemed like he was very happy to be the center of attention and for the first time he seemed to calm down. There was a skanky older woman there who said she'd worked as Hugh Hefner's assistant many years ago and had some stories to share with Al. Near as anyone could tell, Al had no interest in anything but her vagina. When he saw that we were still around, he invited us to come sit next to him at his table. I said that we wanted to get a picture with him and I gave the camera to the skank while Juli, Natasha and I sat on Al's lap for a picture. As soon as the flash went off, Al started getting a little grabby and we all jumped off his lap.

There were a few other people still hanging around while we chatted with Al, and for some reason, just seeing Al talk about New York made Juli and I feel more homesick than we had before. Al continued his sexual harassment of Natasha while Juli and I tried to cock-block. Al told us that he had an apartment in Amsterdam and that we could use it any time we wanted. He had discovered weed again in his 60s and loved it. He even told me that he used his Social Security checks from the government to pay the rent

on the apartment, which was so wonderful and delicious that it made me want to do the same thing when I'm old: Make the government finance my foreign drug den. At the time, San Francisco had just passed a proposition allowing people with cancer or AIDS to get pot without getting arrested. There were clubs where, with a doctor's note, you could walk in and buy different kinds of weed. Al really wanted to do it and wanted me to help him. Since he was already admitting that he was a fat, impotent diabetic, I figured it would be easy for him to get a doctor's note. He gave me his business card and then gave us his whole schedule.

He has a huge house in Pompano, Florida where he has run for sheriff a few times and lost. The house is thousands of square feet, packed full of high-end audio and video equipment. In the yard is a huge sculpture of a hand flipping the bird to all of his neighbors. He has a small studio apartment in New York, a two-bedroom apartment in Los Angeles and his place in Amsterdam. He said in Amsterdam he always leaves a big bag of weed in the fridge and all of his guests were welcome to have as much as they wanted.

The skank started to come on to Al a little, so he suggested that we all go out to eat together. By then it was after 11PM and we all had to work the next day, so we decided to go home, but Al said he really wanted me to call him. He needed some help configuring his satellite system and wanted to get some medicinal marijuana. He told Natasha that he was going to eat her pussy and then fuck her in the near future and she looked like she was going to puke.

I did some research over the next few weeks and I saw a few ads from doctors who would evaluate patients to see if they could qualify for prescription pot. It was a transparent ruse because the ads made it seem like insomnia and boredom were medical maladies that required medicinal maryjane. I called Al's office in New York, left a message telling him what I'd found and I even left the numbers of a few of the doctors. I figured I'd never hear from him again but he called the next day. He left a message on my machine calling me a faggot and assuring me that he would soon be having sex with my wife and then he'd move on to Natasha. Then he said he was glad he had met us. If you want to hear the message for yourself, please read the online version of this story on negcap.com because I posted it as an MP3.

I called him back and we spoke for at least an hour. He was fascinated to hear about how a faggot like me was able to get a successful woman like my wife and keep her happy with my tiny penis. At least that's how he was interpreting the story. He told me that he had an ad manager who had ripped him off for a ridiculous amount of money and that he was miserable and on the verge of bankruptcy. Like many other alternative newspapers, *Screw* runs ads for whores, but unlike the *New York Press*, they don't put bars over the slits and nips and they have a lot more transsexuals in *Screw*. According to Al, the trannies came down to the office regularly with new ads, new pictures and new female names. They paid his art director in cash for their ads and the art director had allegedly been pocketing the money for years. Al flipped out, fired the guy, filed criminal charges against him and then spent many issues of *Screw* portraying his former employee as a gay hustler with a thirst for cock.

I honestly felt bad for Al because he barely knew me but he was spilling his guts like he had no other friends. I later realized that he complains about everything all the time, so it wasn't about me at all, he did it to anyone who would listen, whether that was his viewers on the show, his paying "students" at a seminar or the drive-through clown at Jack-in-the-Box. We talked all the time over the next few weeks and he said that he wanted to hang out with me, Juli and especially Natasha. Usually every call involved him telling me

that I needed to help him to fuck Natasha because she would listen to me. There was absolutely no way Natasha was ever going to even kiss Al Goldstein (I put a transcript of my wife and Natasha having a frank sexual discussion of Al Goldstein on the web version of this story) but Al was one of those guys whose sexual strategy was to wear women down until they agreed to have sex with them. He was working on me instead of Natasha, so his pleas pretty much fell on deaf ears. I would occasionally tell Natasha that he still wanted to date her and she would laugh and say, "What a pig!"

I continued to talk to Al on the phone at least once a week. He had hired a new assistant named Jennifer, though he never said what had happened to the last assistant. He told me that he was sending Jennifer down to his house in Florida to take care of some of his business and check on his house. He also wanted me to help her set up

Natasha "Shnish Rocket" Vlahovic, me, my date, the honorable Senator Al Goldstein from Sodom and my wife Juli.

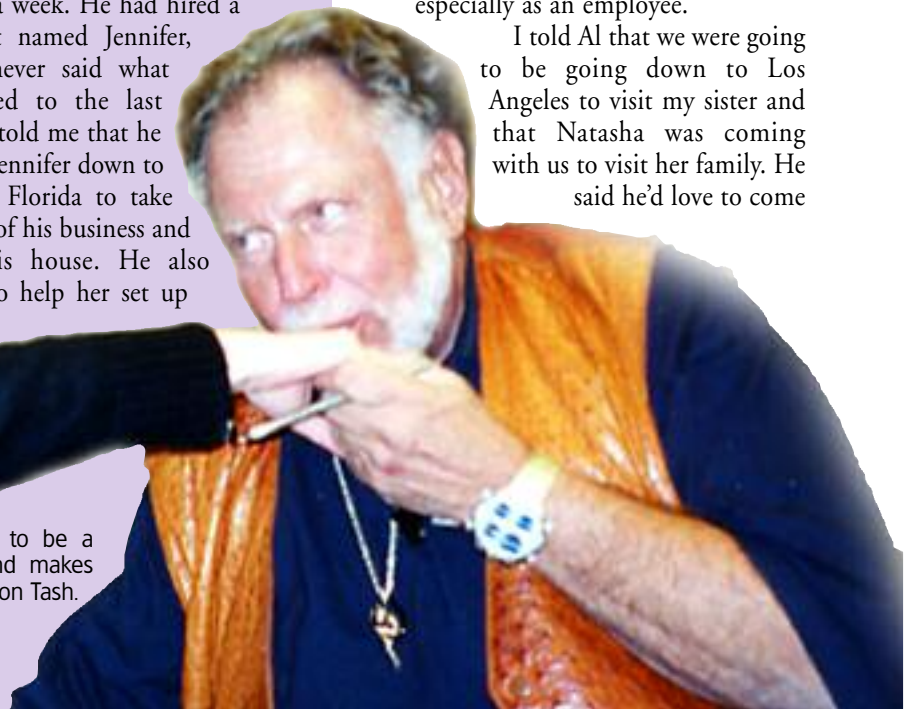
his satellite receiver and a Replay. I was starting to feel a little used, but I liked talking to Al, and in a weird way I felt bad for him. He just seemed like such a sad old glutton, filling up his stomach because he couldn't fill his heart. He was also hilarious and a guy I'd been watching on TV since I was 20 in my first apartment in Manhattan. So I helped Jennifer when she was down in Florida and we had a long talk about what a weirdo Al was. She seemed like a really sweet girl.

When he called a few weeks later, he told me that he had fired Jennifer and that she was a "stupid JAP cunt." I thought it was probably to her benefit that she get fired, because I can only imagine what dealing with his mood swings must be like, especially as an employee.

I told Al that we were going to be going down to Los Angeles to visit my sister and that Natasha was coming with us to visit her family. He said he'd love to come



Al's pretends to be a gentleman and makes his first move on Tash.



out and meet us and offered to let us stay in his apartment. I thought it was a little weird and said we would be fine at my sister's place. He said that his DirecTV wasn't working properly and he didn't know how to fix it. At the time I had satellite TV and had added the ability to fix them to my experience points for my next adventure. I said I'd take a look at his system and see what I could do,

hoping it was a loose wire or reversed cables.

A few weeks later we were hanging out in my sister's apartment waiting to hear from Al. He called me on my cell and invited us over to his apartment and then out to dinner. I asked if my sister and her husband could come as well and he said that would be even better. My brother-in-law, Jorge, is like most other men in that he is a consumer of porn. He couldn't believe he was going to meet Al Goldstein in person and was bugging out after he got the nod from Al. We drove over to Al's apartment building and when we got there it looked the building from *Melrose Place* if it was infested with termites and the elderly.

Natasha had come down to LA with us but was nervous about going to Al's place. We all volunteered to cock-block so she was



encouraged enough to come with us to his apartment. I introduced Al to my sister and brother-in-law and he was clearly in a good mood. He gave us a brief tour of his little home and even showed us the bottom half of the duck mounted on the ceiling of his bedroom that women could stare at while he ate them out.

His apartment was smaller than I expected and his kitchen was piled high with food and magazines. He had all kinds of tchotchkes like you wouldn't believe: a life-size statue of the creature from *Predator*, glazed and framed articles about Al from newspapers and magazines, and waist-high towers of Al's TV appearances on VHS tapes. As much as I might goof on Al, there was a time in my life when my home had the stench of old smoke (though mine was pot, Al's was cigars), was filled with VHS tapes and there was a full-size inflatable Godzilla standing in the corner, so sue me. He said his friend Joey was going to be coming by with his girlfriend and we said that would be fine.

Al told me to fix his fucking satellite, so I waded through the mess of wires and got down to fixing other people's problems. I think he had gotten a hacked card from some shady guy and the satellite people had fried it. I told him to call the satellite company and request a new card or ask the guy who got him the first card for a new one. He was disappointed but then told me to set up and configure a cordless phone. My wife calls this problem, "The Curse of Competence," meaning that if you're good at anything, people will ask you do everything and tell you it's because you're better at it. A demand becomes a compliment, in theory, but to me it's just annoying. I've taught myself how to do everything, from juggling and magic tricks to graphic design and computer networking and it was always because I didn't

want to rely on anyone else to get things done. There's a very good reason that there's only one name on the masthead—I can do everything in here all by myself. I do need plenty of feedback, criticism and cash, like any other zine publisher, but I'll take what I can get.

I got the phone working, programmed a bunch of people into Al's cell phone and then decided it was enough. When Joey showed up with his girlfriend I was surprised because from what I

understood, Joey Buttafuoco was still married. We didn't need to be introduced—I was born and raised on Long Island and not only is Amy Fisher my age, my friend Jennifer Naiburg's dad was her lawyer. We were all expecting Joey to be a total schbag (my personal shorthand for a douchebag, FYI) guido but he was actually a very funny and nice guy. Not that I would fuck him—he was still legally married as far as I knew. Oh, and there's that whole penis thing, too. His girlfriend (mistress?) was also very nice and we all sat around Al's disgusting living room getting to know each other.

The whole thing took on a surreal quality and Jorge kept looking around like he couldn't believe his own eyes. I am one of those people who always wants to enhance intense experiences by taking drugs, so I



Every article written about Al is covered with a sticky glaze and mounted like a cheap whore at the Bunny Ranch.



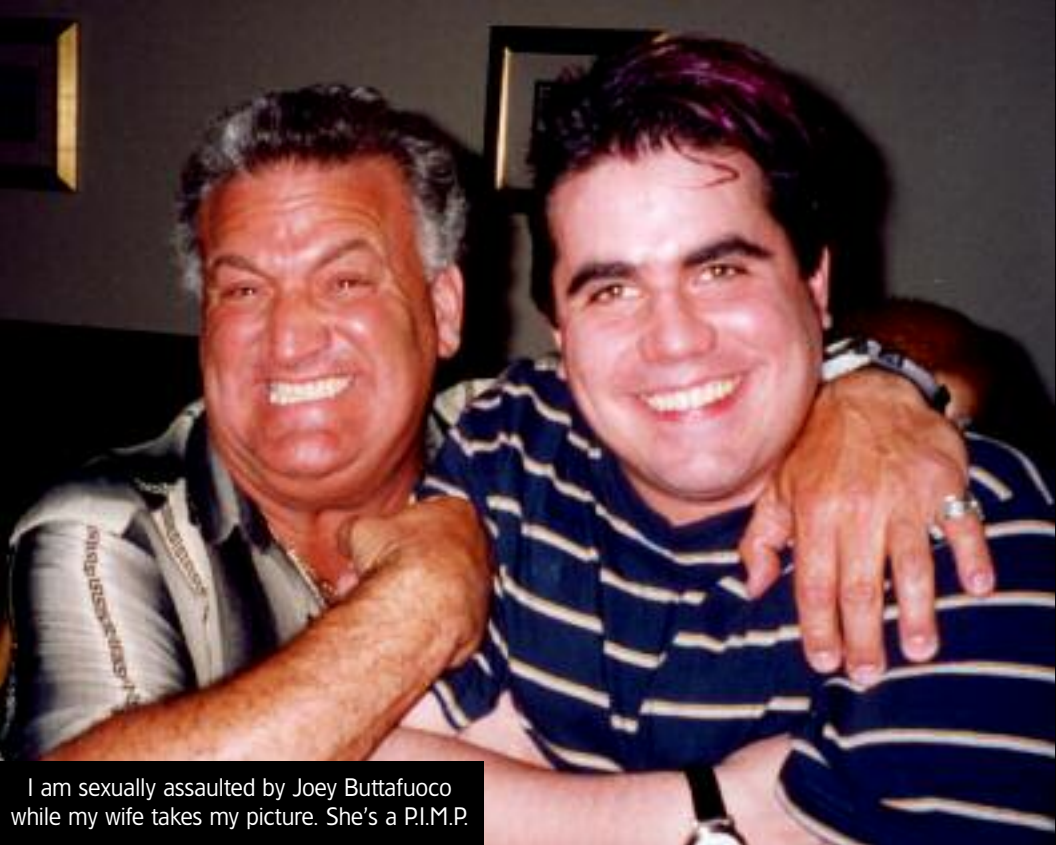
Al's disgusting kitchen piled high with food.

asked Al if it was OK if I smoked some pot in his apartment. Of course it was OK, he was the one who had a place in Amsterdam and wanted me to help him score some medical marijuana. I packed a bowl and let Jorge go first so I could take a picture of him. I did a puff, puff, pass and offered some to my sister, but she said she was driving. I know that weed makes Natasha paranoid, so I knew better then to offer. I offered some to Al, Joey and his girlfriend but they were already enjoying cigars.

My sister is the bravest and boldest person I've ever known and she has always voluntarily done things I'm too timid to do, like complain to a waitress or return something to a store. My sister has no qualms about telling people what she wants so I was not surprised when she took out her camera and told Al and Joey that she wanted some pictures. I was too shy to ask, but as soon as she started taking pictures, the whole thing turned into a Kodak moment, as my pictures clearly illustrate. When she was done with the pictures, she began grilling Joey on his history and telling him all about how we grew up on Long Island. He seemed to like us and everyone got along very well.

When we finished the bowl, Al was hungry and we discussed where we should go. Whenever I am in a city that has a Cheesecake Factory, that's always my first choice. I don't even eat cheesecake, but the food, service and smosphere at Cheesecake are always excellent, especially the one in Beverly Hills. Whenever I think I have a good idea, seven hundred other people have already had that same idea and I end up on line behind them, wishing them dead. By the time we got there we had met up with a few of Al's other friends and getting a huge table at Cheesecake was going to be at least an hour wait. Al and Joey both tried to use their negligible fame to secure a table in a more timely fashion but in LA getting a big table requires at least B-list fame plus looks. Being a fat pornographer or a fat adulterer with a murderous mistress may get you preferential treatment at Chili's in the Valley, but not Cheesecake in Beverly Hills. Joey knew a little Italian place that was within walking distance and we all agreed that Joey must have the guido equivalent of gaydar: He can sniff out a loaf of garlic bread from a few blocks away.

The Italian place was deserted and the staff immediately threw together a bunch of tables so we could all sit together. We were



I am sexually assaulted by Joey Buttafuoco while my wife takes my picture. She's a P.I.M.P.

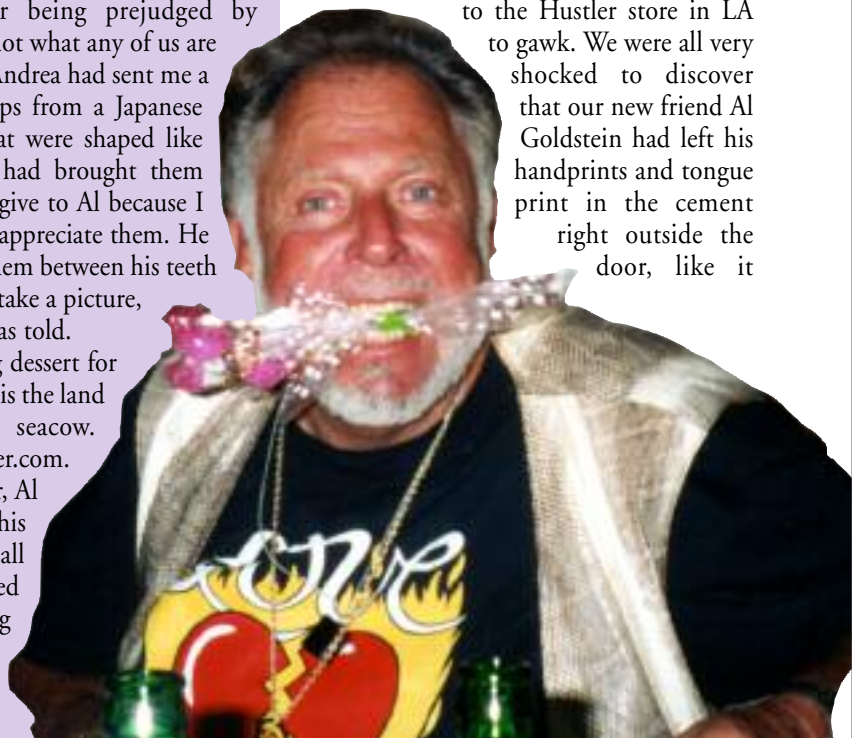
introduced to an ex-girlfriend of Al's, some doctor that Al knew and then the skank from the Learning Annex in San Francisco showed up. Apparently Al had flown her down because she was easy, but not on the eyes. The skank's arrival didn't even slow down Al's relentless assault on Natasha's defenses, but Juli and I cock-blocked pretty well throughout the meal.

Dinner was very good, not as good as Cheesecake, but Joey was happy that he'd picked a good place. Joey shocked us all by paying for dinner, which was very generous considering he'd met us only a few hours earlier and the fact that Al was the one who had invited us. Maybe Joey was used to being treated poorly or being prejudged by people, but that's not what any of us are about. My friend Andrea had sent me a bouquet of lollipops from a Japanese fertility festival that were shaped like sex organs and I had brought them with me to LA to give to Al because I thought he would appreciate them. He immediately put them between his teeth and insisted that I take a picture, so I did as was I was told.

Al ordered a big dessert for himself because he is the land equivalent of a seacow. Manatee. Whatever.com. After it was all over, Al invited us back to his place, but we were all a little overwhelmed by the whole thing

and would need at least an hour to discuss the evening's events. Al said he wanted to take us all out for a date on Sunday. He had tried for years to join the Friars Club but they always kept him out. Some connection had gotten him into the LA branch and their rules of reciprocal membership got him into the Friars in NYC. As part of his membership requirements, he had to dine there four times a year, and since sleep is the longest break Al gets between meals, he wakes up famished. He wanted to do brunch and said his pal Ronny might be able to join us. We said that would be great, thanked Joey for buying us dinner and went home.

On Saturday, my sister took me and Juli to the Hustler store in LA to gawk. We were all very shocked to discover that our new friend Al Goldstein had left his handprints and tongue print in the cement right outside the door, like it





Joey, Natasha and Al Goldstein make a delicious sandwich. Notice the Predator statue behind them.



My sister Jennifer gets very cozy with Joey Buttafuoco.



Left to right: My beautiful wife, Julibug, Joey Buttafuoco's mistress, Joey Buttafuoco, me on Joey's lap, my brother-in-law Jorge, my sister Jenne, Al's friend who claimed to be a doctor, Al Goldstein, Natasha (standing behind Al) and the Notorious S.K.A.N.K.

What's the difference between *Screw* and the *NY Press*? *Screw* costs money and it doesn't think it's important. There may be some men out there who for one reason or another claim that they don't own or enjoy any porn, but I really don't give a shit about those liars. Every single man in the non-Muslim world owns pornography of some form or another and I would even say that more men than you would imagine have ridiculous collections. I know there are so many men who have to lie and hide their porn, and I feel your pain. I figured out a good way to hide porno when I was in college—I label it as something that no one I know likes or would want to watch.

When I was in college I would label my porn as "Darkroom Techniques Demonstration"

Poe-Naw-Grah-Fee

was a porn walk of fame. Juli and I decided to flip off his mark and we had my sister take the picture. We didn't buy anything but we had a great time shopping.



"Fuck you, fat man!" say the fat people, ironically.

The next morning we got a call from Al, who said that his friend Ronny and the skank from San Francisco would be joining us. He gave us directions to the Friars Club and we met him outside. Not that it's really relevant, but I want to say that LA is so fucking empty, phony and shitty that I don't know how anyone lives there. They are very friendly and old-school at the Friars and the place reminded me of the 21 Club here in NYC, which has had the same customs and traditions as it did in olden times. We took an elevator up to the banquet area and saw that it wasn't very crowded. They seated us

at a huge table on one side of the room and after we got seats, we went to the buffet.

Al asked one of the waiters to remove one of the turkey's legs at the "carve your own dead thing" bar. The guy was happy to fire up the knife and amputate the leg for Al. A few minutes later, porn star Ron Jeremy joined us at the table. Luckily, he was on the other side of the table so shaking hands was out of the question. He was wearing a Hawaiian shirt and dirty sweats and looked like he hadn't showered in at least a day. I had to assume that somewhere in his body hair a massive batch of baby batter was crusting up and flaking off.

The food was more attractive to Al than we were so Ron had to introduce himself. It wasn't really necessary because the minute that any of us heard that he might meet us, we were all debating the pros and cons of a Ron Jeremy encounter. Juli and my sister had a morbid curiosity about Ron and I remember one of them clearly saying that they wanted to see his penis in person. Jorge and I have seen some of Ron's more underground work and realize that he's a disgusting and foul little man who is notable for what I would consider a birth defect and the singular talent of being able to ejaculate on command. I saw this one porno where he was fucking this fat girl's ass in a dirty motel room in Van Nuys and he was wiping shit off his dick with a towel on each outbound stroke. I am quite sure that he cashed a check as payment for his participation in that "incident" and that is just so fucking wrong!

I wanted to dislike Ron but he was too nice. He was trying out a new act he was working on—lame but well-delivered one-liners. He said he was going to be doing live comedy at Studio 54 in NYC and Al was going to be his opening act. His material was hit or miss, but we tried to humor him as best we could. He and Al accused each other of being gay and then admitted that

or something boring. When I had roommates after college I would label stuff as "The Prisoner: Schizoid Man" which I knew my roommates would hate. After I met my wife I started using *Mystery Science Theater 3000* as a convenient decoy. I have always been too honest with my wife and I've convinced her that I'm right about men and their primal need for porn. No one wants to think of their dads owning porn, but some of the first porn I ever saw was in my grandfather's attic when I was nine. Juli asked me if it was because we're straight and I said that gay guys are even more into porno! Good for them, good for everybody. Jerking off doesn't hurt anyone

but religious people and who gives a fuck about those flaming douchebags?

they had fucked a few times, but it was such a gross image that it must have been a joke. Ron asked about us and we told him that we were all from NY, except for Juli, who is from the LA area. He told us that he used to be a special ed. teacher in Queens before he got into porn. Then he said they were going to be making a documentary about him and it was going to be at all the film festivals. It was more of a segue into his recent resume, which included cameos in a few rock videos and in a porn film that Al financed (and appears in) that had a big budget, like \$10,000 or something insane like that.

I left the table to go wander around the Friars Club and see who else was there. Al said all kinds of comedy celebs go there but I didn't see anything but a bunch of cranky old Jews eating brunch. I took some pictures of past Friars but I barely recognized any of them. It was like stepping into some alternate universe. By the time I got back to the table everyone was sick from overeating. Well, Al and Ron were sick, mostly. I had a total of three pancakes and some strawberries. I'm no chazzer, how dare you, sir!

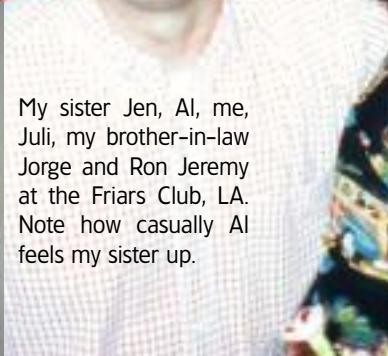
My sister busted out her camera and demanded that other people take pictures of her with everyone. Then we all posed for various pictures and promised to keep in touch like the phony LA assholes we were hanging around with.

My wife and I moved back to New York in 2001 and Al insisted that we come to his office and take a tour. Juli and I went to his office and we invited *mi amigo* Pedro because he loves having a good time doing shit like this and he had never met Al.

The secretary was just as old as Al had told me but she was much sweeter. You would never guess that she works at *Screw Magazine*, but they answer the phones by saying, "Milky Way Productions" so it doesn't sound so sick. The term "magazine" is ironic because in my work experience, I know that publishers refer to both



Ron Jeremy and Howard Stern's long-time producer, Gary "Bababooney" Dell'Abate do the schlong schtick.



My sister Jen, Al, me, Juli, my brother-in-law Jorge and Ron Jeremy at the Friars Club, LA. Note how casually Al feels my sister up.



As the measurements clearly indicate, I'm larger than Tommy Lee and Ron Jeremy **combined**.



Ron suggested that we do this funny picture together and apparently I am not the first person to get this honor. He also held up my last issue for the camera. Way to shill for me, Mr. Schlong!



Left to right: the future father of my nieces and nephews Jorge, Alvin Goldstein of the NY Goldsteins, Al's neighbor Frank who was an aspiring screenwriter like most L-Aliens, the horny, hairy, hedgehog of porn, Ron Jeremy and me, at the fattest I'll ever be.

magazines and newspapers as "books," and say that ads are supposed to be "front of book." The irony is that *Negative Capability* is a true and authentic zine that is often derisively called a magazine and *Screw*, which is a dirty newspaper, proudly calls itself a magazine. It makes no fucking sense. If you ask me, *Screw* is just a bad newsprint zine with lots of pictures of hairy pussy.

When we met up with Al he was wearing his disgusting ostrich leather vest—I swear a whole flock of ostriches died for this orange monstrosity. He showed us his office and it was just as disgusting as his apartment. Everything smelled like an old cigar store and when Al lit a cigar it was obvious why. His office had piles of crap everywhere and the walls were adorned with glazed magazine articles about Al.

When Al showed us the tiny room where he films his rants I was shocked. I asked Al if I could borrow his glasses so I could get a picture with me doing the classic Al statement—flipping the bird sideways. I sat in his famous chair, in front of his dirty American flag, wearing his glasses and I did my best impression of Al, "If anyone can get me the Bang & Olufson multi-CD changer at cost, please call Lenny in the back office. And Mayor Giuliani, for closing down some of the best peep shows in Times Square, FUCK YOU!"

When I started work on this issue, I couldn't find the picture anywhere. I'd had a hard drive fail completely and couldn't afford the data recovery. Besides, I wasn't even sure it was on there because I hadn't remembered ever seeing the actual picture. I checked all my CDs of old digital pictures and couldn't find it. I found Juli's very old 35mm camera but the battery was dead and

there was a roll still in it. I bought a battery, rewound the roll, took to it CVS and an hour later I had three pictures with my nephew from two years ago.

I had given up on finding it when I was cleaning my desk and found my old APS camera that Juli had given me as a gift. I had taken every picture for the zine with that camera, but once I got a digital camera I just stopped using the APS. I got a new battery again, went back to CVS and this time there were three pictures, including one great shot of me impersonating Al Goldstein. You'll find it near the end of this story and I really hope it was worth all my fucking effort.

During our tour of Al's office, he introduced us to his staff. The editor was an

older guy who dressed like a mid-life crisis Harley dude—you know the type. Al passed us off on his editor and went back to his office to smoke. He seemed like he was really depressed but none of us knew what to say. It looked like everyone in his office was ruled by his mood swings but they all had nice things to say about him. I don't remember his editor's name but he used a fake name in the masthead like many other phony assholes like Bunnigrrrl and Ninjalicious. He told us that he was the person that wrote most of Al's editorials, which struck me as bizarre because the editorials read exactly like Juli's Maxi-Rant™ on page 31. He just spews venom at every two-bit asshole that pisses him off and it all sounds so much like Al that I wasn't sure if I should believe the editor. Thinking about it now, I realize that Juli's rants have never been written by her, either. She just starts yelling shit and I race to find a pen to write it down. Usually when I start writing, she is surprised because she doesn't think she's being funny at all, she's just pissed off. I wonder if Al's editor just listens to him bitch and then turns that into an editorial in the same way that I do with Juli.

Screw had a tiny staff and the few other people in the office worked exclusively on his TV show. I would imagine that the show generated a decent amount of money because each hour is



Ron Jeremy sexually assaults my wife while I take the pictures. Oh, I'm a pimp, too, man.



Al got into a huge feud with his son and often told me that he had sent him to Harvard Law and now his son was embarrassed to tell anyone that Al was his father. His son banned Al from his office, so Al had his minions Photoshop his own son into gay porn that you can still see for yourself on www.screwmag.com.

and very hazy footage that they repeatedly imply is Chuck Berry peeing on white women and engaging in various sex acts. I had to see that tape but I would

literally half public-access-quality lowbrow bullshit and half ads for phone sex and actual whores. Pimping may be a lot of things, but you rarely see a pimp on food stamps, that's all I'm saying. I met his art director and felt bad that they had such shitty computers to work with, but I realize now that I've almost always had the shittiest computers at work despite the fact that the faster the computer is, the faster I can rotate pictures in Photoshop and move boxes around in QuarkXPress.

I got to check out their video-editing equipment and see stacks of pornos that had been submitted for review. I immediately thought I should start reviewing porn and video games for *Negative Capability* and began drafting a pitch letter in my head. The editor pointed to a metal bookcase that was literally full of porno movies. He told us that we could take whatever we wanted. My wife was there but she understands that semen is poison and it must be released or I will suffer needlessly. I must have taken fifteen tapes but I had some very special requests. *Midnight Blue* sells a very sleazy compilation video that features Rob Lowe and a friend having sex with underage girls, the girls from the Go Go's (when they were cute, mind you) completely drunk, talking very explicitly,

never pay \$50 for it, not even to review it. I don't want my money used to encourage sleazebags to sell their dirty tapes to Al. They also gave me a copy of the porno movie that Al produced, financed and stars in. Yes, I watched it. Al doesn't have sex in it, but Ron Jeremy does while Al looks on with jealousy. Al is just like a fatter Rodney Dangerfield—he gets no respect at all. Ron gets the pussy and Al gets to pay for it.

When my arms were completely overloaded with videos, the tour ended and

we said our good-byes. A few weeks later I heard him on the *Howard Stern Show* saying that he'd been arrested again, this time

for harassing his ex-assistant Jennifer. He says that he called her home and left messages threatening to, "Take you down with me," and calling her a cunt. After a few of these messages, she filed charges and he was arrested. He tried to make it about the 1st Amendment but I'm pretty sure that the framers of the Constitution were not intending to protect Al's right to call women that he doesn't like "fucking cunts" on their answering machines. I don't know that it's a crime because it would seem to me that she should get a restraining order against him and if he calls again, then he's violated the order and should go to jail. But he was arrested for aggravated harassment and booked for the 12th or 13th time. He was proud of his arrest but this time it wasn't for *Screw*, obscenity or anything that had even a glimmer of respectability.

I called Al after I heard about his arrest but he didn't call me back. I followed the trial and read that he was removed from the courtroom on several occasions for acting up. He published the phone numbers and addresses of the D.A. and the judge in *Screw* while calling them scumbags. A local tabloid said Al had made racist remarks about the Asian judge and was dragged out of court screaming that he was a fat diabetic Jew and they were the Gestapo. Since I had first met Al, he had put me on the comp. subscription list so I read all about the trial in every issue of *Screw*. When Al started putting the judge's head on gay porn actors in three-ways with the D.A., I was sure that he was going to be convicted.

I kept calling Al to hear his side of the story because I just had to hear him justify the shit he was doing but he never returned any of my calls. I left messages with his latest assistant, at his LA place, on his cell and at his house in Florida, but after a while I just gave up. He was convicted and was given a short sentence but naturally Al appealed because he really needs the attention. He has the money, he has the free time and he has a huge hole in his soul that he fills with food, women and attention and no matter how much he gets, he is always going to be starved for more.



there's a little more...

6 Aug 2003—In an interview, Al Goldstein confides: “We’re having money problems [at the recently renamed *Al Goldstein’s Screw*]. The men’s field sucks. Sales are off 70%... After 34 years of being outrageous, we’re fighting for survival... [as Jøsh says repeatedly] *The Village Voice* **took away all my hooker ads.**”

22 Oct 2003—Al Goldstein apologizes in court for harassing former employee Jennifer Lozinski. Begging for mercy, Goldstein tells the judge: “I’m homeless. I’m selling my house. I’m going to be in a homeless shelter... I’m nearly 68 years old. This is not right. I served nine days at Rikers and seven days in a nut house.”

Follow Up



AL GOLDSTEIN
Screwed.

Goldstein says porn mags are doomed

After 35 years in the business of titillating and offending, pornographer Al Goldstein says his magazine can’t compete anymore.

The audience for pornography is just as large, he says, but the Internet has transformed the product and its delivery.

Just over a month ago, Goldstein stopped publishing *Screw* magazine and filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, giving him a chance to cut costs, relaunch the magazine and refocus attention on his Web site.

Similar pressures are seen throughout the adult publishing field. Bob Guccione’s General Media Inc., for in-

stance, has also filed for Chapter 11 protection, although the company’s trademark *Penthouse* magazine continues publishing while the company restructures.

On Friday, Guccione resigned as CEO of General Media’s parent company, *Penthouse International*. He remained at the helm of the magazine, which has seen circulation decline from nearly 1 million to 565,700 over the past five years.

Goldstein said circulation woes throughout the field show “we are an anachronism; we are dinosaurs; we are elephants going to the bone cemetery to die. ... The delivery system has changed, and we have to change

with it if we want to survive.”

Founded in 1968, *Screw* was successful in its early years. Its mix of scatological editorials, pornographic pictures and tongue-and-cheek articles sold as many as 140,000 copies a week. But by last year, sales had dropped to around 30,000.

Purveyors of adult fare must expand beyond traditional publishing methods to survive, said Samir Husni, head of the magazine program at the University of Mississippi’s journalism school.

“The magazine may remain the cornerstone for the name brand, but in the future, the real money will be made elsewhere,” Husni said.

The first zine mash-up

My close friend the internet has helped to popularize a genre of music called the “mash-up” that I find absolutely wonderful. They’re made by taking different songs and literally mashing them together. One of the best ones I’ve ever heard is “Love Will Freak Us” by an Australian prodigy called Dsico, who put the a cappella vocals from Missy Elliott’s “Get Ur Freak On” over the music of Joy Division’s “Love Will Tear Us Apart.” It sounds like it would suck but it’s unbelievably good and one of the most motivating songs in my iPod’s workout mix. The most popular source material for mash-ups is Eminem and I have a guitar rock version of “The Way I Am,” a mix of the *Bob the Builder* theme and “Without Me” and one of my favorites, “Without This Charming Man” which features Em mashed up with the Smiths’ “This Charming Man.” The songs are usually credited as being one band versus another and even though it seems like they’re everywhere, it’s a concept that I first heard on a Rugburns bootleg cassette years ago where they did “Stairway to Gilligan’s Isle” and mixed the music of Zeppelin with the story of *Gilligan’s Island*. I wish I had the skill to make a mash-up of my own because I have some good ideas but instead I’m going to do a written version of the mash-up. Allow me to present my original mash-up, Al Goldstein vs. Karoshi vs. OCD Infinity, “Pee Chills.”

I answered a help-wanted classified ad that was looking for a copy editor for an “adult” web site. The ad didn’t explicitly say “porn” but even if it had, I might have at least gone in for an interview. I’m both a fan and consumer of porn and the industry could use a little creative help, I think. When I got a call saying they wanted me to come in to interview for *Penthouse* magazine I was a little excited. I’d never considered a career in porno, despite my natural gifts in the field. I told myself that I could go down there and as long as the work was interesting I would try to get the job.

I was interviewed by Ed, a balding chain-smoker who was probably forty but looked fifty from the smokes. He actually had an ashtray on his desk and asked me if he could smoke during the interview. I let him smoke because I was too much of a pussy to stop him. I own it, man. I wanted a job. He talked to me a little about what I would be doing, which was essentially getting freelancers to write the porn for the web site, editing their work and then putting it online in a timely fashion. I would need to know a little bit of HTML but most of the editing would be done with a word processor.

One of his questions during the interview was how I felt about *Penthouse*. I felt a surge because I felt like I could be honest and let my personality come out a little. I told him that I

thought it had more balls than *Playboy* for getting a little dirtier and showing more. I wanted to say that I thought it was reprehensible to publish nude photos of celebrities that were acquired from scumbags, but I kept that to myself. I told him that I enjoyed the letters in “Forum” the best but I didn’t really elaborate because I thought it might take the whole thing in an even less appropriate direction.

He told me that in recent months *Penthouse* had “broken new ground” by publishing pictures of women peeing. I can’t imagine what kind of guy would pay money for glossy pictures of women peeing, but my wife doesn’t understand how I can enjoy murdering people in *Grand Theft Auto* more than four nights a week. Ed told me that they had been getting feedback in the letters column—people were responding positively to the new, urine-friendly magazine. Then he leaned into me and whispered, “To tell you the truth, Bob [Guccione, the publisher of *Penthouse*] is into the whole pee thing and he writes the letters that we publish.” He gave me a big conspiratorial smile, like what he was saying was anything less than disgusting. You can keep faking “Forum” letters and I don’t care about the pee stuff, but an editor faking letters to his own magazine to promote his interest in water sports? Is sex really just not enough anymore? What the fuck???

@, E or Nietzsche

When I first heard Eminem's song "Without Me" on the radio, I thought it was juvenile but very funny. At the time I had my own prejudices against him because when a white guy does a rap song about how he's not a wigger, the irony of it makes me lose respect immediately. The problem was that the hook was just too catchy and I literally couldn't get it out of my head. Every night before bed, my mind would turn the lyrics over and over until I thought I was starting to lose it. My wife hated rap even more than I did, but when I played the song for her, she had the exact same reaction. Once we had both gotten it out of our heads, Juli and I wanted something new to replace it. I downloaded a few Eminem songs from Limewire and found them to be as funny and offensive as anything I'd ever written.

My wife and I went on vacation to Toronto a few months later and we had no music for the rental car, so we went to Tower Records and got Eminem's last two CDs. We listened to them both like obsessed retards trying to discern the lyrics so we could at least sing along without looking stupid. The more we listened, the more he reminded us both of of me. The more I thought about it, the more I realized what it was that we had in common.

We both watched our moms do drugs in front of us. We both were awkward misfits as kids. We both feel pure fury that we vent at the hypocrisy of the world and our words are laced with humor, profanity and insight. We both like sex, drugs and making fun of all people in equal measure. More than that, though, is that both Em and I sincerely feel misunderstood and

maligned and neither one of us wants sympathy from anyone. Eminem is constantly dissing other rappers just like I constantly rag on other zine publishers. He uses a backwards "E" as his symbol and when I was a kid some people called me "schwa" because it sounds like Joshua. The symbol for a schwa (which is an unstressed vowel sound like the "e" in linen) is an upside-down and backward lowercase "e," which I used as my personal symbol when I was a teenage hacker in the early 80's. In the same way that Eminem can joke about rape, murder and drugs and then sing a love song to his daughter, this zine has always had my condemnations of humanity followed by my declarations of love and loyalty to my wife.

All of that got me to thinking about the other people who have also had many of these same traits and I always ended up coming back to Bill Hicks and Nietzsche (minus the drugs and sex, I think). As a gift, I got my wife Eminem's book (yes, he wrote a book) called *Angry Blonde*, which features the back story to his lyrics along with the lyrics themselves. The more I read, the more his lyrics sounded exactly like things I had written. I thought it would be interesting to see if my readers could tell the difference between us as writers, so I collected quotes from all three of us. To make it more challenging, I paraphrased the quotes so that a clever person couldn't tumble the game by entering the quotes in a search engine. All of the quotes are taken from my zine and web site, Eminem's actual lyrics or Nietzsche's published works. Answers are on www.negcap.com.

My time hasn't come yet and the world isn't ready for me.

There are no facts and no absolute truths.

The best way to fuck up kids is to tell 'em that only people that think like them are worth respecting.

There's a very good reason that I want nothing to do with my fellow man.

God help me before I commit some irresponsible acts again.

The great majority of people are so stupid it's scary.

Overreaction is my only reaction.

I plan to answer my critics with equal harshness.

The lowest common denominator is exactly that, the lowest.

Any man who says he isn't in love with himself is lying to everyone.

I can't change what I think and I can't change who I am but if I offended you, good!

Most things will be clear if you can think. Those that can't will feel weak and stupid.

If you don't like me you can suck my dick until you numb it.

You have to make people fear you before you they will listen to what you have to say.

After fighting with a woman the guy worries that he hurt the woman too much while the bitch thinks she didn't hurt him enough.

with tips and recommendations
from the experts at Negative Capability



You don't have to be
a dummy to take
this advice, but it helps!

Blatant Stupidity

FOR DUMMIES

2nd Edition

A Public Service

Most of us see dumb people all the time but we never know if they were born that way or if their skills were acquired. For the most part, everyone is born stupid. Some people shine as a result of the right kind of intellectual stimulation while others languish, retarded and unloved, throughout the South. The thing of it is, as a smart person, I often find myself feeling jealous of the truly stupid. Sometimes I feel very cursed by my brain because it torments me.

When I can't sleep, it's because my brain doesn't care what time it is, there are still many puzzles left to solve and untenable situations it wants to figure out from every angle. When you're smart, you're always expected to do so much more. If I had a dollar for every time some stupid teacher (who was basically someone who barely got through college and teaches little kids things only little kids don't already know) said that I wasn't living up to my potential, I would have \$548. And if I had just put that money in

a Vanguard Index fund, I would have nearly two grand by now. That's what it is to be smart—everyone expects you to do too much.

But I always thought that being smart would make my life easier. I'd excel at intellectual pursuits, find a rewarding and challenging career and of course, I'd rest comfortably with the knowledge that no one could touch me at *Jeopardy!* I haven't been that successful in life. I have never earned more than \$32,000 in one year, and I have a fucking Master's, okay? My wife, at age 23, at her very first job, made a lot more than that, right out of school. Now which of us is truly smarter? [Since writing this piece I have finally gotten a job where I make more than I ever thought I'd make, so I guess things are finally looking up!]

Being stupid comes with a ton of perks, not the least of which is that people are actually impressed if you don't shit your pants or drool. That's all it takes: using a toilet and keeping the

saliva in your mouth. I can do that easily, but I'm smart. I am supposed to program a computer to analyze faint radio signals from space and write the great American novel. If you're a fucking moron, all the pressure's off and no one is even going to check up on you. You might even get a party just for finding a job or a mate, but that will never happen to me.

So let's say you're smart. Let's even go so far as to say you're close to my level, meaning you've done better than 1300 on your SATs and you innately understand how weather works. I know it's a stretch, but since I don't really know you, you might as well play along. Let's say for argument's sake that you're tired of all the pressure associated with being smart and you want a fucking change. I can help. I can get you out from under.

I've seen dozens of those books where they explain everything, "For Dummies." I never could figure out why anyone would buy a book

that was calling them an idiot. If you call me an idiot, it makes me less likely to voluntarily give you money. That's just me. I would much rather read a book that's clearly introductory rather than one that actively insults me with big, bold letters announcing my idiocy every time I look at it. Why not "For the Almost Retarded"? And by "retarded" I mean "capable of anything!" [Thank you to the lovely and talented Sarah Silverman for that brilliant line! Sarah, my wife will let me make sweet love to you, FYI!] Would you buy a book called, *Turning On Light Switches for the Almost Retarded*? I know I wouldn't, but I'm not almost retarded.

The following tips are for those of you who want to be blissfully stupid because the pressure of being smart is too much. I really do feel your pain and sincerely want to help. So, if you want to be dumb too, here's all you need to do to get there.

STEP ONE: FREE MEDICINE!


Sometimes people hide really fun drugs in their medicine cabinets, but it's deliberately mislabeled so that people don't steal them. Quite often really crafty people will go so far as to put their fun drugs in bottles marked "Poison," just to make sure curious people like you don't enjoy all the fun that drugs have to offer, or just to scare you into not taking them. Don't fall for it. Most people that manufacture or grow illegal drugs do a good job. You know why? If you buy bad coke from some guy, you won't go back, right? Drug dealers have to rely on word of mouth because they can't advertise or sell them out in the open. As a result, they make sure that their drugs are good, safe and pure. This is even more true for prescription drugs. Every single prescription drug has been rigorously tested hundreds of times by both the pharmaceutical company and the FDA. They all know what they're doing because they don't want to get sued. The bottom line is, whether the drugs are legal or not, they've been tested, they're safe and you ought to take them. It doesn't matter if it's not for you, or even that it's a prescription drug. It's fine. Just take whatever you like. Even if it's for your friend, even if it's labeled as poison, even if you don't have any of the symptoms. Just take the drugs and then you decide for yourself if you like it or not. Don't listen to the naysayers and paranoid types. If you want to have fun and enjoy new experiences, take a chance and take someone else's medicine. The most fun thing to do is to visit your friends and sneak into their bathroom when no one's looking. Find their prescriptions and steal a few of each. Then, when you get home, mix them all up and snort them and wait for the fun to begin! You never know what adventures you can have until you try, so go ahead and do it today!

STEP TWO: AMP UP YOUR BRAIN!


Did you know that your own body uses electricity to control your nervous system? It's true! Your body converts food into energy which shoots around your body in the form of electrical impulses. Right now, as you're reading this, your body has a current running inside of it that's sending signals to your eyes to process these very words into abstract ideas in your head. In fact, unless you read out loud, the words being spoken in your head are the result of these electrical impulses that I'm talking about. Isn't that amazing? Of course it is! So, you understand that your body works on electricity, and it's what helps you to think and process information, right? If there was a way to get more thinking, more processing and more electricity going through you, that would be a good thing, right? Of course it would! The best way I know to get more electricity is to use one of the many outlets in your home. You have to figure that the more juice, the more brain activity! So, get yourself a fork or some other piece of metal and bend it in half so that you can get both ends into an open socket at once. Then, to add a little extra fun to the game, get naked and start playing with yourself. When you think you're about to reach the point of no return, reach over and jam that fork right into the socket! Once the electricity starts to flow, it'll launch you into the most powerful orgasm of your life. And all that extra juice will send your brain into overload, filling your head with even more delicious pleasure! It's so wonderful!

STEP THREE: FREE SEX!

A lot of people are more cautious about sex ever since AIDS began spreading, but really, do you know any regular, normal, heterosexual who has it? Of course not! It's always some city-dwelling, promiscuous bisexual who's into weird art, urinating on other people and other sick sexual practices. Rock Hudson, Keith Haring, hell, is there anyone out there in the least bit surprised to learn that screaming queen Jm J. Bullock got the HIV? Of course not! Now, think about how many famous heterosexuals that live normal lives that have it. None, right? Of course. So, there's nothing to worry about! Go out and bang everyone, but make sure to stay the hell away from perverts, because they might have it. Condoms are pointless because you could wear one, go through the whole act, and then have it break in the end. Then you'll realize that you never needed it in the first place. It's not about safe sex because there's no such thing. But if you choose your partners wisely, there's nothing to worry about. If the person you're going to sleep with has weird sores or coughs a lot, avoid them. If they speak normally, watch the same TV shows you do or own their own home, they're perfectly safe to fuck without a condom! Have fun!



A WORLD WITHOUT



AND



... WOULD BE LIKE A WORLD WITHOUT



AND



foxnews.com

Welcome To My World



WHEN I GOT MY FREEDOM BACK a few weeks ago, I decided that the world was dead to me. Not in an abstract way; I mean that I regarded the entire world as already dead and anyone who crossed my path that disagreed would be smacked back down into their grave. There was only one thing in this whole dead world that ever meant anything to me—revenge. I hustled like a starving pimp to find the means to that end and I knew I'd find it in Miami. The first thing I needed was money because we all know that money is power and sometimes all these dead motherfuckers understand is a real man displaying his power.

When I woke up this morning at the car dealership, I had no idea where the last few days had gone. I don't drink anymore, so I can no longer conveniently blame alcohol for the holes in my memory. I vaguely remember stopping at Phil's place on my way over here, but I don't remember what I bought from him. He's always got dangerous shit for sale and maybe it's better if I don't remember what I bought. My wallet always feels lighter when I wake up, but that's the

curse of being a man, I guess. You can't trust anyone in this town unless you want to end up double-crossed and dead in a ditch. Having a vendetta is just like carrying a TV—it's a job just big enough for one man who is strong and who can focus on the task at hand.

I grabbed my keys, walked down to the garage in the back and decided to take the Cuban Hermes that I'd stolen a few days ago. It's a big boat of a car, but it's roomy and gets the job done. It had already taken a lot of damage, but on my way over to the diner I stopped at the Pay N' Spray and got the dents hammered out and a new paint job. There are days

when I wake up here and I wonder what the hell has happened to my life. It seems like no matter what I do, I end up on some crazy, fucked up mission to do something that's going to get someone hurt or killed, but as long as my neck's not in the noose, I don't give a fuck. When it comes to death, my motto has always been, "Better you than me," and when it comes to money, "Fuck you, pay me."

I met my contact at the diner and he was flaming pissed off. He said that some rival gang members were bringing in high-quality printing plates to make counterfeit bills. I had





I was driving along the beach when I finally caught up with the assholes who had my plates and they had no idea what they were in for. I pulled my car up alongside them, lowered the passenger window of my car, raised the Uzi and aimed it right through the window at the driver. I squeezed the trigger and I

neighborhood no matter how armed I was. I could feel my car start to shake and shimmy as the fire spread from the engine to the rest of the car. Shit, I was just about to finish off these guys and complete my mission.

I grabbed two of my favorite guns and bailed out of my car while I was still doing 30MPH. As I scraped up my arms and knees, I dropped both guns and my car just kept on rolling, spewing smoke and fire. The assholes looked surprised that I bailed on my car, so they slowed down. For a second I thought they would turn around and try to waste me while I was splayed out on the hot pavement, bleeding from both knees. As the thought flashed through my mind, my flaming car continued to roll toward them where they'd stopped. I sat up, grabbed both my guns and tried to get back to my feet. As I stood, the engine of my Hermes violently exploded, sending flaming debris right into the assholes. Seconds later their car was engulfed in flames. I reloaded the machine gun with a clip from inside my vest and walked toward the two burning vehicles. As I got close, I could tell that no one was going to get out alive. Except me. I didn't even have to fire another shot. I walked up to the burning corpses in the car, opened the passenger door and retrieved my case full of plates.

Some Haitians must've heard the explosion because they came over to investigate. You can't blame them, but witnesses are witnesses and there's only one rule for dealing with witnesses, even if they're armed. Shoot first, shoot second, shoot third and if there's time after everyone's dead, you can ask questions. To tell you the truth, I don't even know how many of them I shot, but I did take two hits right to the middle of my vest that hurt like a motherfucker, but probably not as bad as the headshots I was dishing out. I stole one of the Haitians' Voodoo cars and headed over to my print shop to drop off my plates and start making some *real money*. It's just business, man. I don't take it personally and neither should you—after all, it's just a game.

an interest in a printing plant in the middle of town and those plates meant big money if I could get my hands on 'em. I am sure the guys who currently had them weren't going to give them up without a fight, so I made sure to have plenty of ammo when I left the diner. On the passenger seat of my Hermes I had a couple of good guns including a Desert Eagle and a small Uzi. I got word on my cell phone that the target was leaving the airport with my plates and I immediately shifted into combat mode.

must have fired more than fifty shots because I shot out the back passenger window of my car, both side windows of the other car, and even put a couple of hot bullets into the face of the front seat passenger, who was holding onto my briefcase of printing plates. By the time the driver got his gun out and aimed at me, I was shocked that he hadn't returned fire before. I slammed on the brakes and let him pull his car out in front of me. I hadn't seen the guy sitting in the back seat of the car, but he sat up, blew out the back window of his own car and then started shooting at my prized Hermes. The hood of my car was riddled with bullet holes but the guy couldn't hit me if he wanted to. I had a vest on, but you can't wear a vest on your head, so I still felt exposed and in danger. Smoke started billowing out of my engine and I smelled burning oil. Jesus, I just had this car fixed. I mean, these assholes could tell I meant business, but they acted like they had a chance in hell to get away alive.

Once the oil started burning, it was only a few seconds before the first licks of flame came out and then I really started to panic. I was looking around for another car to steal, but I was in the slums of Little Haiti and there's nothing there but angry, unemployed and crazy Haitians. Not my idea of a good



I've never changed a tire, I can barely drive a stick.

I've only had one cavity and one wisdom tooth removed in my entire life and they both happened to me the same weekend I had to go to my grandfather's funeral.

I use two different asthma inhalers and take three kinds of asthma pills every day.

I have no alcohol in my house for me but I do have vodka and beer for guests.

During the internet boom, I used to watch CNBC regularly even though I had about \$300 worth of stock, which was my entire portfolio.

I've never had anal sex, either pitching or catching.

For many years I had a Jesus night light in my bathroom that was given to me as a gift from Bonaduce (see "Karoshi" on pg. 32) because he was pussywhipped and his Jewish girlfriend wouldn't let him display it. My wife and I are also both Jewish and we think it's hilarious.

I hate old movies, meaning almost everything made before 1980. I've never seen *Gone with the Wind* and I walked out of a free screening of *Citizen Kane* after forty minutes because it was awful and I was so bored I thought I was going to be ill.

There are at least three mutant hairs that grow on my body, one on my left bicep, one on my left shoulder and one on the left side of my stomach. All of them grow very rapidly to more than three inches long and my wife thinks it's fascinating.

I have met at least two people who later murdered someone. I was friendly with Michael Alig back when he was king of the Club Kids and he was always very pleasant to me. Years later, he murdered a drug dealer who attacked him and now he's in jail. They made a good documentary about him called

Party Monster and later Macaulay Culkin played him in the fictionalized film version. Both films were good but neither captured the real magic of the moment. I met record producer Phil Spector at a funeral with my friend the Junkie, who was a huge Spector fan. We didn't know the deceased, Doc Pomus, but the Junkie knew that Phil would be there. Spector was a creepy little man in heels and he gave me the douche chills. In 2003, a woman that he had just met was shot to death in his house and I find it highly unlikely that she would have shot herself with his gun.

The first three concerts I saw were Rush, Rush and Rush and at the second one I got my first contact high from the stoners in front of me.

I have no tattoos because I think tattoos are the hallmark of white trash.

One of the most embarrassing things that ever happened to me started when I masturbated so I could fall asleep, finished into a tissue and threw the tissue in the garbage. The next morning I woke up and went to the bathroom and after I was done peeing, I saw a line of ants marching across the floor. They were tiny little specks, but there were thousands of them. I followed the trail back to my bedroom and saw that the line went up the side of my garbage can and into the garbage. When I started digging around I found what they were after. There were hundreds of them swarming on my cumrag, eating all of my precious sperm. I can honestly say that my children have been attacked and eaten alive by ants.

In the beginning of 1989 I had only \$30 to my name, all of it in cash in my wallet. By the end of the year, I had more than \$100,000 that was all mine and I hadn't done anything illegal or even morally wrong and I didn't have to do any work.

I sincerely believe that New York City is the only place that exists in the present. Everything filters down from NYC and it travels in waves. Most of Canada is in 1988 (go and see for yourself), England is in the early 90's, Europe is still stuck in the mid-70's and most of Africa is languishing somewhere in the late 1800's.

I can have an orgasm and completely maintain my erection.

Even though I self-publish, I still consider myself a wordsmith, editor, art director, photographer, designer, circulation manager and freelance asshole.

I part my hair on the right and grow it long on the left because when I was seventeen I acquired a huge scar on my head where the hair never grew back. I got the scar from the 46 stitches that I needed after I knocked out the windshield of my VW Bug with my head, 20 on the inside of the wound and 26 on the outside to close it. The cut severed a lot of the nerves to the top of my scalp so I can take a pretty serious beating to the head and I don't feel a thing.

I have two TiVo Series 2s, a dual-processor Mac tower and a G4 iBook that are all part of a 128-bit encrypted wireless network in my home that I built and maintain myself. I do not have a home phone, just a bluetooth cell phone that my job pays for. The TiVos get program data and new software updates from my best friend the internet. He's a good guy, that internet, and he just knows EVERYTHING!

The last four digits of my social security number and my phone number contain three 9s and one 1. My birth year also contains three 9s and one 1, but one of the 9s is upside-down. The last three of my UPC were randomly assigned as 666.

For the past two years I have used a pot delivery service where bags of weed are called "tickets," and in keeping with the metaphor, good weed is "front row" and seedy weed is stickered "general admission." I page a guy named Ryan and he calls me back from a blocked, disposable cell phone. He asks if I need tickets and gives me an estimate of how long it will take someone to reach me. I never say my name or give any information. Each delivery has a two-ticket minimum, but you get 20% off when you buy more than four tickets at a time. If you buy ten at once, you get one free, but I've never gotten the free one because to me buying ten at a time means you have a drug problem and I clearly don't have a drug problem.

I have an old cow-patterned bathrobe from Nick and Nora that my wife bought for me a long time ago. I wear it when I get out of the shower twice every day.

I hate musicals because I'm heterosexual and I hate when people sing instead of talk. I also don't think it's gay to get a blowjob from a guy because a blowjob is always good, like chocolate is always good, no matter where or who it's from. Taking a dick in your mouth, on the other hand, is gay only if you're a guy. Otherwise it is wonderful. And there's not a goddamn thing wrong with being gay. My boss is a gay African-American, but he's never been considered a minority.

I have flown first class on five occasions and I've never paid for it with money or sex, but twice it was with miles. I've never been on the Concorde and never will be.

I have been cutting my own hair since I was eighteen because I don't need to pay anyone else to fuck it up, I can do it myself.

I am *against* the death penalty but I am also *for* serial killers. We all have to die some day and it should not be the government's business to decide, it should be up to us. After all, isn't this a democracy? No, it's actually a republic, which is different because it's a representative form of government. There are no politicians that represent my point of view and I doubt there ever will be.

Whenever someone asks me to toast them with a drink I always say, "L'Chaim," which is Hebrew for "To Life," because I think it's the best reason to drink. Whenever anyone sneezes I say "gesundheit" because even though I think all things German are creepy, I think it's more creepy and religious to say, "Bless you," especially since I would never mean it.

Whenever I go to the airport in New York I realize how much I hate foreigners and whenever I go to a mall I realize how much I hate Americans.

I have one plant in my apartment that my wife named Big Erns after a retard who sent me a few e-mails that I published in *NegCap* #2. It's a very small, bushy reddish tree that is growing in all directions and seems to be thriving despite the fact that I barely interact with it. Erns is the only plant I've ever had.

I have never, and will never, weigh more than 200 pounds.

I have been working on this piece since I started my zine in 1997 and I had to remove a few things that were no longer true.

I have driven all the way across the United States three times in my life so far, with three different people: my sister, my ex-friend Jay and my wife.

The shark is the only animal I am afraid of and even though on some level, I think I could take a shark, I know that a big shark would easily turn me into shark shit. I am not afraid of other animals because I can avoid almost all of them by staying in New York City. I like spiders and whenever a spider has made a web in my home I try to catch bugs to feed them. Whenever I find a bug in my house when I have no spiders, I gently catch it with a cup and put it outside, even if it's huge. I'm like the Beastmaster when it comes to catching insects, but once our white trash downstairs neighbors let crickets escape from their lizard's cage and the crickets made a home under our bed. My wife caught seven of them using her raw animal skill and I was really impressed because the crickets were keeping us awake every night until she caught them. After she caught them we always let them go because we regarded them as escaped slaves who had earned their freedom.

When I was in kindergarten, the teacher called my mom in for a conference because she had confiscated a sex manual that I had written which included many illustrations. I don't remember knowing anything about sex at that age but my mother says that she saw my sex manual and I knew plenty. Unfortunately for all of us, they threw it away or you would be reading it right now.

Here's
a photo
of one
of my
very long
mutant
hairs.



These Maxi-Rants™ were shouted at me by my wife Juli and you as a reader should hear them in your own head as the screaming rants they are. I wrote them down as quickly as I could and explained any obscure references. She rants more often than I do, but her topics are whatever random things that are annoying her at the moment. Enjoy a cathartic release as she vents and please try to stay on her good side.

juli's Maxi-Rant™

"You gotta be pretty fuckin' bad if I won't fuck you. The Comic Book Guy [from The Simpsons] is pretty close to unfuckable. I'll fuck ugly guys if they're clean and have nice clothes, but if they're good looking and wear heshier clothes, it's a no. If you have ever worn stirrup pants, you're out. I would never fuck a guy who hangs out in a comic book shop—I'll tell you that."



While watching video personal ads on a local cable show called Strictly Personal: "If you are a girl advertising that you are kinky or even hinting about sex in your personal ad, you are asking for trouble. Keep your mouth shut because you're going to attract a lot of freaks that will try to fuck you. The thing is, if you are a girl, you don't have to say anything, you can just go on a date and then say you want to fuck, and they will just fuck you. There's no need to advertise."



After watching a commercial with ALF hawking some long distance service: "ALF should just be killed. We should just burn him alive." I said, "Do you want to burn the puppet or the guy that controls the puppet?" and she screamed at me, "ALF SHOULD JUST BE KILLED!"



"Bill Paxton is a piece of fuckin' shit. That guy needs to fall off a bridge and be eaten by sharks. That tornado movie [Twister] was the worst movie ever. Bill Pullman is a hot guy. Steve Buscemi—he's a dog, but I bet he knows how to fuck."

When Juli saw former Beatle Ringo Starr in an ad for some financial services company she screamed, "Go die, you sellout old crow!"



"I saw a guy on the bus and his eyeball looked like one of those cow eyeballs that they let kids play with at the Exploratorium [a very unique science-themed museum for kids in San Francisco]. It was blue and watery and it had a bunch of layers on it and it made me sick to my stomach. That guy should be forced to wear sunglasses.

What does he care? It's not like it's going to darken his vision. Not to be mean, but at least get an eye patch or something."

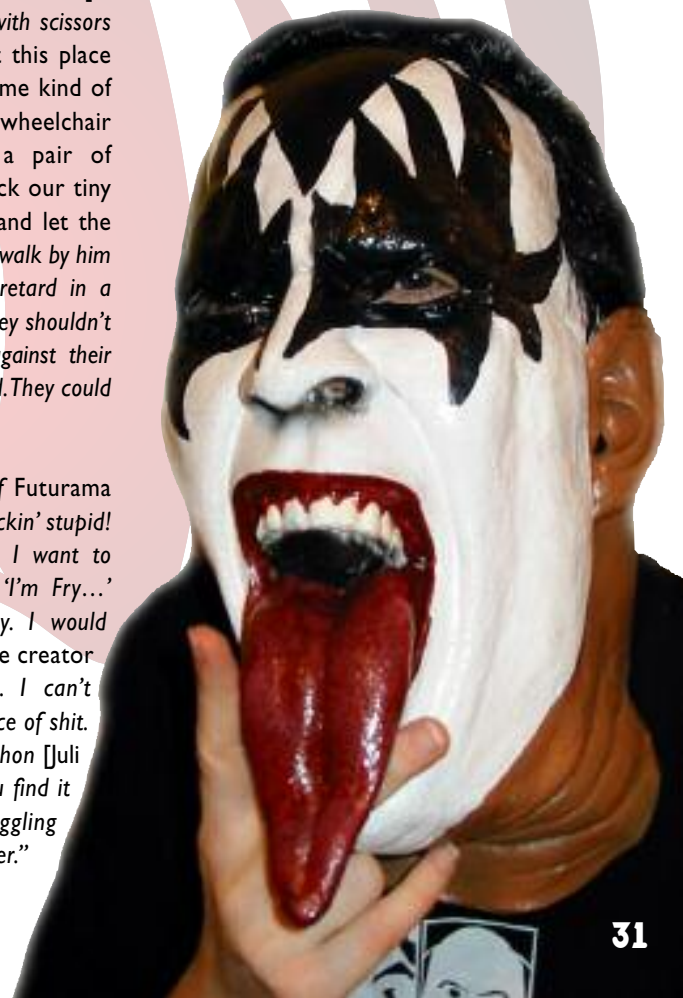


"I don't like monkeys but I like chimps. You could probably get them to replace retarded people. They could sew buttons on coats or work a shake machine—or they could get 'em to cut tickets [at the movies] like that retard I saw with scissors in a wheelchair. [I was with her at this place and it was bizarre. The kid had some kind of palsy and they left him alone in a wheelchair at the theater entrance with a pair of scissors. We were expected to stick our tiny movie ticket between the blades and let the kid cut it in half.] You could probably walk by him because what can he do? He's a retard in a wheelchair." I disagreed and said, "They shouldn't make monkeys work because it's against their nature," and she said, "Yes, they should. They could easily teach them things."



While I was watching an episode of Futurama on TV, Juli yelled, "I hate it! It's so fuckin' stupid! When I hear that music—ecchhh! I want to punch you. [in a sarcastic voice] 'I'm Fry...' None of the characters are funny. I would expect more from Matt Groening [the creator of Futurama and The Simpsons]. I can't believe he puts his name on that piece of shit. I'd rather watch a Bugs Bunny marathon [Juli hates Bugs Bunny]. The fact that you find it [Futurama] entertaining is mind-boggling to me. I think you should know better."

I receive a lot of different submissions for this zine but so far I have only published my writing, a few random letters that I found entertaining and my wife's Mini-Rants™. I tell this to everyone who asks and even posted it on my web site, but people still send me their bad short stories, music and books. I sat down recently to look at a submission I had received. Juli yelled, "Why are you going to read that shit? I know this story: You're gonna read it. You're gonna say it's so fuckin' bad and then you're going to say you don't even want to write about it and I'm going to say, 'See? I told you that you wasted your fuckin' time.' You don't even have time to read the books that you buy. You can read it when you sell all that shit in the closet and then paint the baby's room." [For the record, my wife thinks it's acceptable to let a baby live in a large closet for the first two years of its life and that it would be "cozy" and not creepy. With all the money we'll save we can put some away for the kid's future therapy needs.]



過

(Man Is Trapped Under His Office)

勞

(Work Stabs Man In The Back)

死

(His Grieving Family Can Afford A Nice Funeral)

(karoshi)

I've finally reached the point where I can say that I've been working for more than half my life. I certainly hope that when I am old and decrepit (assuming I'll be so lucky) I will be able to honestly say that I *played* for more than half my life. Toward that end, I've nurtured my own fantasies of making it big through talent, perseverance and the sheer force of my massive will. I have not eliminated the idea of sucking up, paying my dues or even serving as an apprentice to a talent greater than my own. It's just that no matter what I do, no matter how hard I try, no matter how much I suck up, it always ends the same. "Sorry, Jøsh, but we no longer have any need for you. You're free to go." They sometimes feign sadness or worse, actually express pity, but the truth is, it would be much easier if I just rolled up to work one morning to find the

"A clown was my boss at every job I ever had. Clowns run all the record companies that ever said we're bad." — Too Much Joy

whole place burned to the ground. At least then I could say, "That's why I can't work here anymore! There's no *here* left!" That would make it a lot easier. More often than not, when I'm fired, I have little else to do besides console myself with the hope that the next idiot they hire to replace me will do the job even worse than I did. Like a pathetic, dumped loser pining away for his ex, I always hope the new dude banging my ex has a little dick that rarely works and she'll miss me so much that by the time I get home from the dumping there will be ten messages from her, begging me to come back. With work, once I'm gone, I hope that all the systems that seemed to hinge on my excellent performance will begin to curdle in my absence and people will say, "Who is the asshole that got rid of Jøsh? I want that person fired, *NOW!* And get Jøsh back!"

Instead I find that the world goes on without me.

No businesses have crumbled to the ground and no replacement has fucked things up so badly that my shortcomings now seem quaint by comparison. Once I'm gone, it all returns to that normal, like it was before I got there. It's just over, and like all failed relationships, once the must settles, all that's left is the hurt, the anguish, the lingering questions and of course, my seething, bottomless rage toward everyone and everything my ex-employer represents. I am not sure if it's irony or merely a symptom of an even larger problem but I am writing this introduction at a job that I am sure that I won't have in two weeks. This time it's actually pretty clear why I'm out the door. My time here started almost a year ago. I got a call from the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* because they received my resume for a position in their production department. The woman on the phone gave me the whole song and dance about how great the *Guardian* was and what they needed me to do. I instantly knew that I could handle it because I live and breathe Quark. After half an hour on the phone jumping through hoops and expressing an interest in things that bore me to tears, we got to the heart of the matter—money. It had gone smoothly and because I was feeling so good about it, they offered me half what I was making at my last job—and the kicker was that it was a minimum of 45 hours a week. What I used to make in two and a half days I would have to earn by giving up freelancing, giving up working at my own computer and giving up all my freedom and flexibility. All for half what I used to make at my last job, DOING THE EXACT SAME WORK. Had I suddenly gone from the land of the rich to the Third World? No, of course not. I couldn't do it. I could not accept the job. I actually laughed at the offer, thinking that maybe they thought I was just out of school. Then I thought, *they're not kidding*. They really want me to take *that much money* to do *that job* for *those hours*. Do they think that I live with my parents or on a commune? Thanks, anyway, I said. If you ever pay anywhere in the neighborhood where I live, feel free to give me a call. Until then, take that job and shove it.

or, I'll Burn That

Despite the fact that I was slamming the door to that job permanently, I couldn't help myself. It's not even about dignity as it is about my being unwilling to compromise on the fundamentals. No one else will *ever* tell me what to do in this zine. No one in the world can tell me what to wear, how to do my hair or what to eat and, most importantly, no one can expect me to get up early and come to a job unless they are willing to pay my minimum. Instead of crossing that bridge when I came to it, I thought I was burning it, as I had so many times before. But for the first time in my life, playing hardball worked. Like everything else I've ever done, it wasn't what you would call a smashing success, but it worked. And that's enough for me, for now.

...

The introduction you just read was one of four attempts, each written at four different jobs. Whenever I started writing a new intro, it was like being the author of my own fate. As soon as I started drafting an e-mail to myself with "karoshi" as the subject, I knew the job was almost over. When I think about all of the jobs I've had and lost, this intro seemed to most accurately depict the fundamental flaw in my character that precludes me from landing and keeping a rewarding job. It's my fault, like it always must be. I know that I am a good worker and that I give employers value for their money. The problem is that I have this evil fucking righteousness gene that won't let me compromise on things that shouldn't really mean that much. I don't always think about the big picture and I always used to think that I only needed to do a job well to keep it. But I've learned from hard experience that it's never just the job that you're expected to do. You're expected to be part of a team and have a positive and pleasant attitude. Most importantly, you're supposed to bear in mind that working somewhere obligates you to speak highly of the company and to keep your complaints to yourself. They don't pay you for your opinions, it's your labor they're after. I'm trying to be honest and sarcastic at the same time and failing miserably.

I like working. I need a place to go every day where I can contribute my talent and abilities to something greater than the sum of its parts. I like being busy. It's important to have a sense of purpose because without it, you might end up smoking pot, watching porno movies and playing video games all day. I'm not saying that I've done that, at least not today. I mean not *yet* today.

For reasons I hope to discover by writing this, I am stumbling through life and work blindly, and while on the whole I'm against work, I like having things more than I hate work. And by "things" I mean copious amounts of marijuana and new PlayStation games on a regular basis. I feel like I've been at the bottom of the career ladder for longer than you've been getting laid, and we both want to say that's a long time.

After completing this story I realized that it was way too comprehensive to be enjoyed casually by an indifferent reader. In the interests of maintaining focus I decided to post all of my early work experiences as a web-only introduction. That solved half the problem. I decided that the best way to tell you the story of Karoshi, or, my life at work, was to break it into two separate pieces and publish one in this issue and the conclusion in a future issue. There are many reasons for this, but the most notable one was space—I could literally write a few hundred pages of detailed hell about all the various ways I've suffered and occasionally prevailed. I also use this zine as a calling card and introduction and I thought talking shit about my current job would not only get me fired but thinking about it too hard might make me want to quit. Using the popular three strikes metaphor, I'd like to tell you how I lost three jobs in a row without even trying.

Strike One Shut the Fuck Up and Stop Calling Here

During my first year of grad school in San Francisco, I saw an ad in the paper looking for answering-service operators who had some experience. Since I am anti-social by nature and my school schedule precluded me from taking a strict 9-to-5 gig, I thought returning to an answering service would be a smooth move. I had more than a year of relevant experience (see the web version of this story at www.negcap.com for more about that) and I was both competent and articulate, which made me overqualified by a wide margin. It was a twenty minute drive south of San Francisco to Proxy Message Center's

Brisbane office and since it was open 24/7, I thought I could set my own hours. When I went in to fill out an application, it was obvious that they were so desperate for employees that they hired anyone who wasn't demonstrably insane, which included me. I dressed appropriately, was friendly and outgoing, and despite the fact that I was unfamiliar with their computerized message system, I assured them that I was rare breed of supernerd that could master any computer system within hours of exposure.

The guy that interviewed me was a total schbag named Adrian Borg. Since I met Adrian before *Star Trek: The Next Generation* started, I can only assume that the Borg race was based on him. Adrian was one of those annoying little peckerheads who was the living embodiment of the maxim that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. He had recently been promoted to manage the entire operation and was clearly trying to assert his authority wherever he could. Since I wasn't actually going to be working with him on a daily basis—answering phones is a solitary occupation—I figured it might be the last time I'd ever see him. He offered me a job and said that I could choose any shift that I wanted so I immediately said 3PM-11PM.

My shift supervisor, Mike, was a slightly pudgy guy in his mid-20s with bleached hair and too many earrings. He took a liking to me immediately and on my second day of work he came to my cube and asked if I wanted to take a break. We went to the back of the parking lot and sat together on the curb. He took out a joint and offered me the first hit. I don't know if there's a pot equivalent of gaydar, but if it's possible to subconsciously determine whether a stranger likes pot, I must be sending off strong signals. It was really good pot and since I hadn't smoked in a year, I was wicked high after just a few hits. The rest of the day breezed by and I was happy that there was at least one person at my job who liked me already.

A few weeks later, Mike and I were leaving at the same time and when I saw him waiting outside, I offered him a ride home. He seemed very happy and gladly accepted. When we got to his apartment he invited me up and since I figured more weed would be involved, I accepted his invitation. It was like we had negotiated a ride for weed deal without saying a word. When I got to his room and saw that all of his posters were of muscular men kissing each other I realized that it wasn't my car or my company that Mike was after, it was my sweet, sweet ass. I didn't have a girlfriend at the time, but not having a girlfriend can't make you gay, only having a gay teacher can. I am just fucking with you. Gay is no more a choice than my being a complete asshole is a choice. I was born this way and no amount of prayer or medication is going to change me—or make gay people straight. Anyone who says they used to be gay and are now happily married are lying to themselves, their partners and their fictional savior.

I smoked a bowl with Mike, casually mentioned my ex-girlfriend's sexual habits and he got the message. We were still good friends and enjoyed each other's company, but whenever one person in a relationship has unrequited lust, that energy needs to be transformed into a non-sexual affection or it will eventually undermine the relationship.

Despite my relentless hostility, years of answering service training have given me a very professional phone demeanor. I do this by pretending that I am acting like a good phone operator and I play the role to the hilt. I am courteous, kind, patient and very friendly on the phone, even when people are nasty and bitter with me. Whenever other operators had callers that were flipping out on them they would ask me to pretend to be the supervisor, because I know that the best way to defuse someone's anger is to agree with them until they calm down.

I had been working at Proxy five days a week and every legal holiday for six months before I got a generous 50-cent an hour raise, which was above average for the company, but did not immediately lead to mansions, cars and bitches like the brochure said. It did, however, give me a modicum of seniority at a company where turnover approached fast-food levels.

I became very friendly with the people who worked similar hours and even befriended the graveyard shift, who came in at 9PM and took over for me when it was time to leave. The graveyard shift included Mitch, a guy in his 50s

Bridge When I Come To It

PAYROLL I.D. #		REQUISITION #		OPERATOR #		DATE	
JOB TITLE				JOB CODE			
Telephone Secretary				072			
SALARY		WK HR		RE-CLASS		PROMOTION	
\$6.50							
				INVOL TERM		VACATION	
				PERSONAL DATA		IF REPLACEMENT, LIST NAME OF PERSON BEING REPLACED	
						<input type="checkbox"/> REPLACEMENT FOR <input type="checkbox"/> ADDITION	
IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR							
Adrian Borg							
ADDRESS (NUMBER AND STREET) CITY							
Haight Street #8 San Francisco							
DATE OF HIRE		<input type="checkbox"/> FULL TIME <input type="checkbox"/> PART TIME		<input type="checkbox"/> REGULAR <input type="checkbox"/> TEMPORARY		PAYROLL STATUS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HOURLY <input type="checkbox"/> EXEMPT	
3/22/93						NON-EMERGENCY	
JOB TITLE		JOB CODE		DEPARTMENT		DEPT #	
Telephone Secretary		072		Operations		072	
SALARY		WK HR		DIFFERENTIALS		REVIEW SCHEDULE	
\$6.50				<input type="checkbox"/> LEAD <input type="checkbox"/> SWING <input type="checkbox"/> GRAVEYARD			
						LOCATION	
						Brisbane	

who acted like he knew everything. Everything except how to have a career in your 50s, I mean. We got along very well because we were both bitter and distrustful of management. We would goof on all the retarded memos that were dispatched from the Borg mothership, make fun of the supervisors and try our hardest to maintain our sanity.

There are many different services that Proxy offered: We took orders for rolling luggage and jewelry catalogs, accepted overflow donations to public TV, handled the phones for doctor's offices after hours and mostly took stupid messages for offices who were too cheap to hire a receptionist. Some of our clients were great and some were complete assholes, but we treated them as well as our moods would let us.

After I'd been there a while, the Borg hired a new guy named John Melaragni who was supposed to be some bigshot from MCI. John was cursed with being the kind of gay guy that no other gay guys find attractive: short, bald, chubby and he was employed by a crappy answering service. He was very nice to me and when he said his goal was to make the office more productive and efficient, I hoped he could pull it off. His first order of business was to begin a detailed analysis of our call logs to see where things could be improved.

He noted that there seemed to be the most missed calls from 8PM-1AM and thought it would be good to do something about it. He took a meeting with me and the other people who worked those hours and we all told him the same thing: The problem was that we didn't have enough operators at that time. After 8PM, most people left for the day, leaving just a few people on duty. After 11PM, there were only two people on the graveyard shift and if one of them had to pee, there was just one person responsible for literally thousands of lines. Instead of hiring more people, John just encouraged us all to try to get through each call faster.

A few weeks later, the complaints started coming in from our clients. There were dozens of times when I was taking a long, slow order for luggage and four other lines would light up at the same time. It was

company policy not to put people on hold to answer the other calls, but it was also policy that we answer every call that came in. The two policies were not compatible and it became a serious problem. Proxy continued to bring in new clients while we were still giving bad service to our existing clients. We also weren't doing the one thing I kept telling them to do—hire more bodies. We had all kinds of other problems happening concurrently. We would get new clients all the time, but they rarely provided any information about their products. When customers would call with really simple questions, we would have to tell them we didn't know anything, which made us look retarded and pissed the customers off. I started complaining to John and the other supervisors that without enough information we could not do our jobs properly. No one cared and they always told us to do the best we could with what we had. I actually had to sign myself up for catalogs from our clients so I would know what the fuck I was talking about.

After a few months of things going from bad to worse, Mitch took me aside and told me what the graveyard people had been doing to cope with too many callers and too few operators. Instead of hanging up on them, he would select the ringing line on his computer and instead of answering, he would hit the cancel button on the keyboard. Instead of it registering in the system as a dropped call, it wouldn't register at all, and it would look like all of the other calls had been answered quickly. When people got disconnected, they would either call back in a few minutes when it was quiet again or give up. After Mitch showed me the trick, I stopped complaining so much about the lack of proper staffing. I taught the trick to a few other people who also spread it around to the rest of the employees. It was the magic solution to having too few operators and too many clients and canceling a call wouldn't technically violate either of my prime directives from the Borg. When I was working with three people and nine calls were ringing, we'd each cancel a few of them out, deal with the calls we could answer, and then deal with the rest when they called again.

This worked very effectively for a few weeks and at our next meeting with John and the Borg we were told that we were finally doing something right. It was a relief because having people put pressure on us to do something that was literally impossible was making it much more difficult than it should have been. The job wasn't supposed to require a brain, which is why most operators were dropouts, retirees or overweight single moms.

The Borg seemed happy that we had resolved one of our client's major issues with our service, but he was suspicious because the problem had gone away so quickly. A few weeks later John and the Borg made an announcement that they wanted to talk to everyone individually about our responsibilities to our clients. One by one they pulled people away from their desks and into a private meeting in John's office. One by one operators emerged looking shellshocked. When it was my turn, I couldn't

I have only one picture of Mike, from when he went with me to be first on line at a Neil Gaiman book signing. We were big both fags, apparently. Who ever thought this picture would get published??

imagine what was going to happen. I sat down in a chair that was facing a desk where John and the Borg were sitting with a massive computer printout.

The Borg was smiling, which was very unusual for him and it immediately put me on edge. He handed me the employee manual and asked me to open it to the marked page. He smirked, "Did you receive a copy of this manual when you were hired?" "Yes, but I didn't read it," I snapped back. Who the hell would read an employee manual that was more than 100 pages when all I was supposed to do was answer the phone and take orders? He directed my attention to one of the rules on the page where it said that we were never, under any circumstances, to hang up on a caller. If we had someone abusive we were supposed to transfer the caller to a supervisor. Even if the caller cursed at us or threatened us, we were supposed to be gracious and polite, and it was so deeply ingrained in my personality that I really was calm when people were yelling at me.

John looked really upset about the whole thing but he didn't say anything. The Borg said, "When you were hired, you were told specifically that you were not to hang up on any callers, right?"

"I guess," was all I could say. The Borg started leafing through the printout and said, "Do you know how many callers you personally have hung up in the last few weeks?" I knew it had to be thousands because there were many times when I simply couldn't take it anymore but I was not allowed to leave my desk. "I would guess that it's been a few," I said.

The Borg wasn't expecting me to admit anything but was delighted to correct me. "It was well over 700 in the last month." That may sound like a lot, but when you realize that I was trained to take that many calls in a few hours, it was a very small percentage. Look at me, trying to justify doing the opposite of what I was paid to do. Jeez, I make myself sick sometimes. Adrian said, "You knew that it was against company policy to hang up on people yet you did it over 700 times, is that right?"

He was right. I knew it, I did it, so I just admitted it. And then tried hard to justify it. They weren't interested in my explanation. Adrian told me that they were firing me for violating the rules, handed me a check for the hours I'd worked up to and including that day and told me to leave the premises. They fired more than fifteen people that day from every shift, including Mitch, who had been there for years. I am sure that it only made their problems worse and their rate of dropped calls even higher. Knowing the Borg the way I did, I am sure he felt it was worth it to see the look in everyone's eyes as he caught them and fired them one by one. I know my reaction alone must have made his day because I thought I was bulletproof and I was genuinely shocked to see it end this way.

I went down to the unemployment office the next day and applied for benefits. I had never gotten them before and figured if welfare mothers and the insane could fill out paperwork for free money, I certainly could. The paperwork was a breeze but they said that my first week unemployed I would get no benefits at all. I would also have to prove that I was actively looking for a job and then I would start getting a couple hundred bucks a week. When two weeks passed without hearing from them, I called and got the runaround. After a few more days I went back to the office to see if I could get a person to tell me what was going on. Finally I got to meet

with a bureaucrat who told me that Proxy was disputing my claim because they had fired me for violating company policy. As a result, I was ineligible for benefits. I could appeal my case before a judge if I wanted to but I wasn't sure if I wanted to.

I thought about it for a few days and decided that everyone that got fired would try to get unemployment and that the company would decide that it wasn't cost-effective to fight everyone. I filled out an appeal form explaining how there were too few people and too many calls and losing calls was a consequence of inadequate staffing and mismanagement. A few days later I got a letter saying that I had been granted a hearing with a judge. I was nervous, but by that time I had somehow convinced myself that I was right to hang up on callers and I deserved unemployment. I looked at the hearing date as the only chance anyone would have to tell the employees' side of the story. I was clearly deluded into thinking I was on the right side of a brave crusade instead of a slacker who got caught slacking. Just because I'm sometimes in denial doesn't mean the truth won't come out eventually. In case you were wondering, this zine is the closest I get to therapy, and when I write about stupid, painful shit like this, I literally wince while typing the words. Once it's down, it's a story I have to edit, but when it's coming out of me like this, it really does hurt.

The day of my hearing I actually wore a tie for the first time since my grandfather's funeral. Personally, I think ties are metaphorical leashes and they make the same statement of submissiveness that is made by women wearing dog collars and men with ball-gags in their mouths. I get through difficult situations like this by telling myself that I am an actor pretending to be someone else and I try to play it to the hilt. I brought a folder full of papers, some charts depicting call patterns versus staffing levels that I had made up and even some statements from fellow employees saying how fucked up it was to work there.

I had a hard time finding the room because I thought it was going to be an actual courtroom. Instead it was a small conference room with one long table in the middle of it. At one end of the table was the judge and sitting across the table, waiting for me, was the Borg and Proxy's attorney. Jesus, I was so fucking freaked out. My heart stopped when I saw him. It was like being confronted by a nemesis in a comic book and I had little exclamation points shooting out of the top of my head. The whole legal procedure took about ten minutes. Adrian Borg, cocksucker of the universe, showed the log where my operator number (84) had hung up on people followed by a highlighted page of the employee manual. I never signed anything accepting the terms of the manual but the judge didn't care. I submitted my evidence and he threw away my statements immediately. Then he dismissed my appeal and said that they were denying me unemployment insurance.

Mitch got a job at a different answering service a week after we got fired and had kept in touch with me during my fight for unemployment. The longer the fight lasted, the more money I thought I was playing for because if I won, I would get retroactive benefits to a week after my firing date, in a lump sum. Mitch always asked me to join him at a new place called Connections and after I lost my legal fight I finally went down there. I was hired on the spot for more money than I had been making at Proxy and was once again told I could pick any eight-hour stretch of time that would allow me to continue a life of staying up late and sleeping late. Mitch and I worked evenings with a Filipino drag queen named Leo and a few other people. It was a lot like Proxy in that it was fat single moms and old ladies in the morning while the freaks always came out at night. Connections was boring as hell and their computers were primitive, but I spent almost all my time reading or writing for school and since the operation was tiny, it was never that busy.

A few months into the job, I was about to graduate with a Master's in Writing, so I decided that I should start working in my chosen field. The only hitch was that I totally suck at finding a job. All the men in my family have been dead for years, so nepotism has always been out of the question. There aren't any jobs in the classified section looking for people that write smartass fiction, trust me, I've looked. I sent out hundreds of resumes but I scored a total of three interviews, all as an assistant editorial schbag at a publishing house. It's entirely possible that my lack of enthusiasm was my undoing, but it's more likely that I was unable to convince anyone that I was excited at the prospect of making \$18,000 a year to work 40 hours a week, wear a tie and take regular meetings with people that were dumber than me.

Certificate of Appreciation

I may be a lot of bad things, but I am an excellent employee, at least to hear me tell it. This award is not a fake and that's John and the Borg's signatures.

This Award is Presented to

Joshua Suits

In Appreciation of Service

as Best of Shift

from Proxy

Briksane this 3rd day of August

in the year of '93

John M. Long

[Signature]

I am ready for the world of work
to crucify me, my Lord.

I couldn't convince myself that I wanted the jobs either, but I did try my best when I was there.

During my job search, I met my wife Juli on AOL in a Truth or Dare chat room (see "I Am a Gay Homosexual" in *NegCap* #2). We were just getting to know each other when I got so goddamn frustrated that I decided I had to move back to NYC. I gave my two weeks notice at Connections, packed up everything I owned into my car and hit the road back to NYC.

Strike Two Milton J. Prick, Will You Please Die Now?

Living with your mother is nothing to be proud of, it's something to escape from, even if your mother is good to you and you enjoy her company. There is only one legitimate reason to live with your mother: as a temporary refuge until you can get your shit together. That's the one place you're always supposed to have in case of emergency, but it ought to be a *legitimate emergency*. When I moved back to New York in 1994 I planned to stay with my mother while looking for a job. As soon as I got a job I could afford a place of my own in Manhattan. Even with my shiny new diploma and piles of polished writing, finding a job in publishing was harder and more frustrating than I had anticipated.

During my job search, family members attempted to show their support by clipping articles about people my age who were failing as miserably as I was. This did nothing to encourage me—in fact, it made me firmly believe that a job in publishing was something I could never find unless I was a blood relative of someone named Harper, Collins, Condé or Nast. After three solid months of abject failure, my girlfriend Juli purchased an open-ended ticket and decided to come stay with me at my mom's house. I told her that my mom had said that she could come and stay as long as she wanted, which wasn't exactly true, but it was very close to a vague sentiment my mom once mentioned to me about my friends and her hospitality. At the time, my mom and stepfather lived in Mt. Vernon, NY, which is the birthplace of rapper Heavy D and onetime crack capital of North America.

Two days before Juli was supposed to come, I had managed to get an interview for a market editor position at an actual publishing company in Manhattan. I decided that it would be wise to go to a temp agency on the same day so I wouldn't waste the roundtrip train fare and my time in a suit to fuck up one interview when I could just as easily (and just as affordably) fuck up two.

I went to the temp agency first because I felt like it was less important and that the people interviewing me would be so jaded and bored that it would be a safe place for me to practice my interview skills. I plan on doing an entire story just about all the fucked up interviews I've had because it's more fascinating than any fiction I could dream up. For the record, my interview skills consist of smiling vacantly until my mouth goes dry, agreeing with everything people say to me no matter how pedestrian or offensive and being overly willing to take on any task, no matter how banal, repetitive, dangerous or difficult. When it comes to trying to get a job, I often come across as a desperate woman whose eggs are drying out fast. Somebody—anybody—drop some fucking sperm here!

I wore one of my two neckties, an old Polo button-down shirt my brother loaned me, a pair of jeans that look like khakis from a distance and a pair of nice shoes I'd purchased solely for interviews that were corny, uncomfortable

and so hopelessly devoid of style that they would convince any potential employer that I was reliable and dull.

While I waited in the reception area with the other desperate losers, I kept telling myself that all I had to do was get through these two interviews and I could enjoy some quality time with my girlfriend without worrying about money, my future, or getting a job. I have always felt that the best part about having a job (or a girlfriend) is that you don't have to go through the fucking torture of trying to find a suitable job (or girlfriend). Once you get a job, you gain the confidence necessary to get the next one and the sad truth is that a wedding ring is more attractive to some single women than white teeth and nice shoes. No recruiter or headhunter is ever going to call an unemployed guy watching cartoons in his underwear to find him a job—but if you have a good job, you can reasonably expect a few phone calls from those same vipers who will convince you that now is the best time to trade up. The parallel with women works in this case as well—your friends will always try their hardest to get you laid as soon as you say you're engaged. But if you're single and desperate to find that special someone, you'll get nothing but a sound mocking from your friends. Maybe I just need new friends.

When I finally got the nod to enter the back part of the office for my interview, my mouth was already dry, my palms were sweaty and I had to use all the will I could muster not to run like hell. The interviewer was a pleasant woman in her early 40s and I am such a fucking hateful cynic that I was thinking, "If you know so much about getting a good job, how come your job is so shitty?" It's like the classic put-down of guidance counselors—physician, heal thyself, and guidance counselor, get a real fucking job where you don't have to encourage dimwits to go to trade school and smartasses like me to go to art school. The first part of the interview was designed to fool me into thinking that they were going to match me up with a dream job. They asked me pointed and personal questions designed to gauge how well I would handle the soul-sucking world of temping. I must not have come across as a team player because I left the interview feeling like it was the last time I would ever see anyone there.

I decided to walk to the next interview because it was January in New York and I really enjoy winter weather. When I found the office building for my second interview, I was actually impressed. There was a nice doorman hanging out in the lobby who told me where to go and wished me luck on my interview. I went up to the offices of Mackay Publishing and was buzzed into the office by Rita, the receptionist/HNIC, if you will. She axed me what did I want wif Milton. I told her that I had an interview and she picked up the intercom and screamed, "MILLLL-TON! SOME GUY NAMED JOSH IS HERE TO SEE YOU!" and slammed the phone down. She told me to go see him in his office in the back.

The entire office looked like your creepy uncle's attic: piles of paper everywhere, colonies of dustbunnies planning revolution, broken old furniture and the smell of rotting books. In the center of the disaster was an old man, buried in paper. He must have been eighty at the time—almost completely bald with bottle-bottom glasses and two ancient hearing aids. I sat in the chair next to his desk, handed him my resume and introduced myself. I told him that I had just gotten a Master's in Writing and had been writing since I was a little kid. He asked me a few questions and then handed me a press release. He told me to take it into the next room and "boil it down." I wasn't sure exactly what he wanted me to do so

I asked him to clarify. He told me to use the press release as my source and to write a story that gave the same information but in a more concise way. That's the magic of trade publishing: taking a two-page press release and turning it into a 400-word piece of journalism.

I went to the next room and sat at an ancient electric typewriter with my press release. It was about a new line of greeting cards that were supposed to be funny. I turned eight paragraphs into three and returned to Milton. He read my piece and asked me when I could start. I told him that I had to get my girlfriend at the airport in two days but I could start the day after that. He said the job paid \$25,000 a year—much more than any of the assistant schbag jobs I'd applied for in San Francisco—and he said I'd get two weeks paid vacation. To me it meant that for the first time ever, I would be paid for a holiday but not have to work it.

When Juli came to stay with me, I told her that I had finally gotten a job and I had to start the next day. I really didn't want to start working so soon, but I didn't have a choice if I wanted to move out. I made up my mind that I would try it, take the money and start saving for a security deposit. My mom drove me to the train at some ungodly hour so I could stand in the cold and wait for a train to the city. It was on that first day, as the icy winds whipped through my cheap Gap coat, that I realized that work fucking sucks—and I hadn't even started. The train was packed with other commuters who reeked of sour coffee and sour lives. Everyone looked just as miserable as I felt and I saw my future in all of their haggard, worn-out faces. I brought my backpack with a Walkman, a peanut butter sandwich and a magazine. I planned to take myself out to a nice lunch but brought the sandwich in case I got stuck doing something and got too hungry to wait.

Rita laughed at me when I came in wearing my other tie because she was the *receptionist* and was wearing torn jeans, angry braids and an ugly old sweater full of holes. I was about to run out of nice clothes to wear to work and would have to resort to my actual wardrobe sooner rather than later, but having her laugh at me made the tie burn even more.

I went back to Milton's office and passed three empty desks on my way in. Milton looked disheveled in a wifebeater and short-sleeve dress shirt with ink stains across the pocket. He handed me two pieces of yellow paper and one tattered sheet of carbon paper and told me that everything I wrote had to be in duplicate: one copy for the files and one copy for repro. I didn't know what repro was but I did know that no one writes a final draft the first time. He handed me a stack of mail and faxed press releases and told me to see if any of them were worth writing stories about. He took me to the desk outside his office and said the desk was now mine. I immediately wondered what happened to the guy that was there before me. I was clearly replacing someone, and as soon as Milton left, I rifled through the desk like a cheap detective in a cliché. Steve Schneider! I found one of his discarded business cards! I wondered if I would actually have a business card with my name and title on it. I couldn't think of anyone I could give it to who wouldn't goof on me but I hoped that I could get cards that said Josh Saitz, editor.

I heard two girls come into the office and decided the smartest thing to do was get to work, in case Milton came back. I started opening the mail and reading it. It was all letters from greeting card companies announcing new products with slides and photos. I turned their press releases into "stories" for *Greetings Magazine*, the most heinous piece-of-shit trade publication since *Colostomy Magazine*. I made up the name "Colostomy Magazine," but I am sure that there is a trade magazine for people with colostomies and without even seeing it I can tell you that it is better than *Greetings*.

Katie (or Kellie Krunchbar, as I called her) and Felicia were both around my age. Katie was the editor of the other trade publication the company did called *Intimate Fashion News (IFN)*. Felicia was the editorial assistant who was doing the shitty, bottom-of-the-ladder job I'd tried so hard to get before. I think she got the job through nepotism because her father worked in the building and that seems like too much of a coincidence to me, but I digress. After I'd been there for an hour a creepy little hunchbacked woman named Lillian came to my desk. She wanted to introduce herself and check to see if I was Jewish. She was almost as old as Milton but had a slightly tighter grip on reality. She asked me to fill out some tax forms but didn't say anything when I asked about health insurance.

The year was 1995 and while some magazines were going to an all-digital workflow we had an IBM 386 that ran at a blistering 25Mhz. It had 2MB of RAM and a primitive word-processing program but Milton wanted me to type everything in duplicate and reuse the carbon paper until it literally fell apart. I wrote stories and would then submit them to Milton for his approval. For the first few months he nitpicked every goddamn thing I did until I thought I would have to strangle him. For some reason I thought it would be a good idea to really try to write the pieces in an interesting way. Every time I used a 75¢ word, he would cross it out and write the nickel word. If I ever wrote "I" or "me" I was rebuked for injecting myself into the story. Now that I think about it, the first issue of my zine was written while I worked there, and I tried to write in as opposite a manner to my work writing as I could. For every fluff, piece-of-shit press release I

One of the best things about my office was that this was the view from the window next to my desk.

Milton, my hateful prick of a boss, who taught me that everything sucked in Olden Times but everything sucks even more now.

regurgitated at work, I wished Christine Baranski and Anne Rice cancer for being such hollow cunts when I got home. I never wanted to write for money after I worked there because it always felt completely unnatural and wrong to use whatever talent I have in the service of garbage. I wish that other whores in marketing, advertising, public relations—and every dick at Disney—would realize that they are corrupting the world with their vileness and decide that voluntary suicide is their only viable solution. Or just stop wasting your brain contributing nothing but shit and for the love of Lurky, change jobs.

The really ironic thing about Milton's consistent beating me down as a writer was that he sincerely believed he was upholding some kind of journalistic credo. There's nothing even vaguely journalistic about what any of us did, and we were kidding ourselves like almost every professional writer must kid themselves. Unless you're writing incisive essays for the *New Yorker*, investigative pieces that involve more than making phone calls from a desk, or this zine, you are not a writer. What you are rhymes with "hack." I am not saying everyone at the *New York Times* sucks because I find the writing boring and devoid of personality—that's like criticizing a Special Olympics gymnast for not staying on the balance beam.

The company had one sales guy who was a creepy old alcoholic named Alan and a saleswoman named Barbara who had breath that had the fetid stench of stale coffee and mung. I'll never forget that smell as long as I live. Alan was responsible for getting ads for *IFN* and Barbara was the rep for *Greetings*. I was what Milton called the "Market Editor" and I think in his mind there was a greeting card district somewhere out there in the City.

The reality of the greeting card industry is that Hallmark owns almost everything, is privately held and crushes the competition. American Greetings is a distant second and the remaining scraps are divided up among the fringes. If anyone ever advertised, I had to write about them, interview them about their line, talk up their products and basically act like every other whore in publishing. Barbara was once pitching a potential client and thought it would be a good idea for him to talk directly to me about what I could write about his line. She called me on the intercom, told me what she wanted me to do and I flatly refused. I didn't even care if she told Milton. There is supposed to be a figurative wall between advertising and editorial but that bitch was trying to pull me over the wall, and it was never going to happen. She wisely never tried it again. I did write about all of our advertisers, but it was because they were one of the few people who would submit samples, press releases and photos to use, to fill the pages of *Greetings*.

Milton was nearly deaf, frequently smelly and came in every morning before 7AM. He lived alone in a condo in Westchester and had a daughter who lived in the City. Before any of you were born, Milton and Ray McNerny founded Mackay (Mac for Mc and Kay for the first letter of Milton's real last name—it's not Prick, but it might as well be), purchased *IFN* and began publishing it. It had been around since the 1890's and I think there's something primal about the connection between Jews and textiles. It wasn't until later that they expanded into another niche and began *Greetings*.

Juli and I lived together at my mom's for a few months and I saved up enough money for a security deposit. We looked in many neighborhoods but ended



THE EXTRAS IN THE MOVIE OF MY LIFE, from top to bottom: Alan, the closet alcoholic ad sales guy, Felicia, the flirty assistant, Lillian, the hunchback, who carries thousands of years of Jewish guilt in her hump, and Norma Barnett, our Jamaican bookkeeper who paid employees based on her mood.

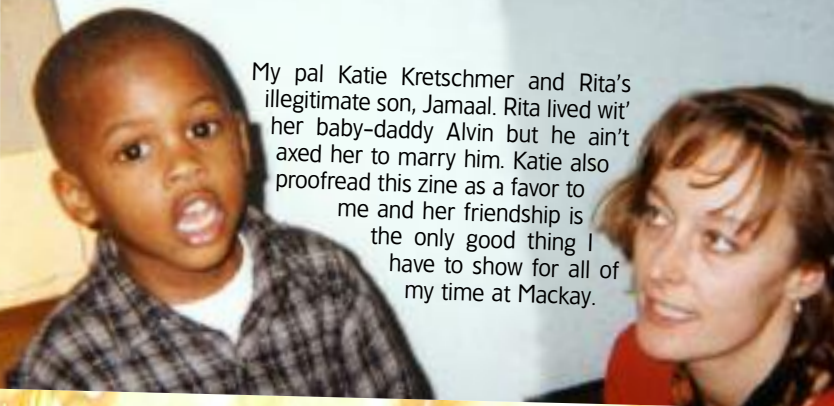


up finding a 350-square-foot studio literally two-and-a-half blocks from my office, in a no-fee building. We found a guy in the *Voice* who came over and built us a loft bed with a ladder, and then I spent an entire paycheck on a shitty, foam futon at Pier One to furnish the place. Those were the fuckin' days.

Once we moved to the City, the job was much easier. I could literally roll out of bed at 8:40AM, shower, eat and get to the office by 9. I could also go home for lunch and smoke a bowl and watch some porn. Nothing makes the rest of the work day go by faster, let me tell you. Milton yelled everything at me all the time because he was a prick and because he was deaf. Whenever I got fed up with his yelling and I had the balls to yell back at him, he would calm down and tell me to relax and lower my blood pressure.

As my writing clearly indicates, I am anti-social by nature and the worst part of the job for me was doing our monthly retailer profile. I would have to call around to greeting-card shops and ask if *Greetings* could do a profile. Most of the time they had never heard of *Greetings* and weren't interested because they thought I was trying to sell them something. After a lot of rejection, I wrote a script for myself that I would read to each store owner with specific things to say so they would let me do a profile. If I was a small-business owner, I would jump at the chance to get any publicity for my store, but in this case, it was probably a waste of time because our subscribers were other card retailers and they were not potential customers.

I decided to look at our subscriber list to find some stores in the City that received our little trade publication. I found a few, looked up their phone numbers and called them. Since they had seen the magazine, they knew what a worthless piece of shit it was and blew me off when I called. When that failed, I decided to call card stores that I really liked and that I thought would make a good story. I would call, ask for the owner, read my little prepared script and then see what kind of reaction I got. If I got a good vibe, I would tell the owner how much I liked the store, the displays and the card selection and I always made some remark to indicate that I'd actually been in the place. That usually worked because people loved to talk about themselves. By the time they'd ask me where I was from, I would tell them I was a writer for the only trade publication for greeting-card retailers and if they would be interested in talking to me, I would love to do a puff piece on them, their store and their history, and I would take a lot of pictures. Milton gave me a shitty convenience-store 35mm camera to take pictures but I was embarrassed to have such a bad camera so I brought my own Canon 35mm. The whole process was painful—me asking stupid, pointless questions and writing down some shopkeeper's small business story. The big fancy Hallmark stores would *never* talk to me and many hung up on me when I called. Sometimes they would refer me and my questions to their corporate PR flack. I know that many people think of Hallmark as being this friendly, homespun company that only has good intentions, but Hallmark is a huge, evil monopoly with cards in the same way that Disney is with bland, disposable children's entertainment and Microsoft is with bloated and buggy operating systems.



My pal Katie Kretschmer and Rita's illegitimate son, Jamaal. Rita lived wit' her baby-daddy Alvin but he ain't axed her to marry him. Katie also proofread this zine as a favor to me and her friendship is the only good thing I have to show for all of my time at Mackay.

After I had done a few profiles I decided to have fun with it, so I did a profile about this flamingly gay store on Christopher Street where the owner was a hilarious old leather guy and all the cards had naked dudes on them. My boss never even looked at it or read it because if he had, he wouldn't have printed that story in color, which he did very rarely. Physically speaking, my design work at *Greetings* is the direct antecedent of this zine because I based my first issue on the last issue I'd done of *Greetings*: 48 pages, black and white interior, glossy 10pt. cardstock cover in full color. I was doing the Bizarro *Greetings*, rather than writing nice things about bland people I was writing mean things about hateful people.

At *Greetings* the actual production of the magazine was *very* old school. I would write copy on an electric typewriter and after it had gone through one round of revisions I would fax it to our typesetter in New Jersey. A few days later they would messenger over the first round of proofs, which were printed on white paper. I would then correct all the typos and fax it back so the typesetter could make corrections. Then they would send me what they call "repro" paper, which looks like glossy photo paper. When the repro came in, I picked a color for the month and then photocopied all of the repro onto the colored paper. Milton would take the stories and copies of the ads to make a dummy issue, which is essentially a map of where all the editorial and ads are going to go. I have never done a map for this zine, but we always did one for *Greetings*. If a story didn't fit anywhere, it was put into a cardboard box top called "overmatter" and saved for a future issue. If we had a hole in the current issue, Milton would sift through the overmatter to find a piece that fit in the puzzle. I was always writing short, shitty blurbs about industry news, reviews of stationery-related events and bios about which jerkoff got promoted to senior vice president of ass-licking. The bigger the asshole that I wrote about was, the more pictures came with the bio. I cannot fathom why a loser card salesman would want to be written about in a trade publication that had a circulation of perhaps 10,000 but I guess everyone wants their fifteen minutes, even if they suck.

When it came time to actually put the magazine together, it was my job to use a hand-waxer and wax all the repro. We didn't have a scanner, so in order get pictures in the magazine, Milton or I would paste the photo or card to the back of an old press release and send it to the engraver, as Milton called it. Milton used a plastic measuring wheel to scale the images to match the space in the map and then he would write the percentage that the engraver should shoot it. They would literally take black and white pictures of the stuff and send it back to me to cut into little pieces, which were then laid on the boards around the editorial. Very often Milton's measurements would be wrong and we would end up having to make a photocopied enlargement of the picture and then use the dirty and grainy photocopy in the magazine. Jeez. It was so fucking welfare.

At press time every month, I would very carefully cut out all the copy and lay it in columns on these disgusting boards that were literally older than me. I would do the same thing for the black and white pictures our engraver had taken of the cards. Milton would then dig out the used boards from last month's issue, tear off all of the articles, put the ads in a bin in case they were running the same ad again, and then re-use all the dirty, torn up and disheveled boards. The main problem with having Milton do the boards was that his vision was terrible, his office was a disaster area and he couldn't put anything down straight. He was also painfully slow but I didn't want to volunteer to do the boards for him because I know if you volunteer once it becomes your job forever.

After the boards were all assembled, he would tape a used piece of parchment paper over the whole thing and hand it to me to proofread.

As anyone who works in publishing will tell you, it's very hard to catch your own mistakes, which is precisely why we use spell-checkers and proofreaders. We had one regular columnist named Polly Guerin who would drop off an awful hand-written piece once a month that I had to type and edit. Milton wrote exactly one editorial piece for each issue which was a mish-mash of old Henny Youngman jokes lifted verbatim from his books, some comments about how things were better in olden times and some sexist remark that he was thinking but would attribute to some random stranger he overheard in Grand Central. He wrote like he thought he was a *macher* (Yiddish, noun; someone who is a power player) and was exhorting our readers to prepare early, listen to the buyers, treat the customer right and offer a good selection. Besides those two worthless pieces, I wrote, edited and proofread everything else for *Greetings*.

The first time I found a mistake on a final board Milton told me to leave it, but I couldn't. When I wouldn't sign the board indicating that it had been proofed and was acceptable, he yelled at me and said I was trying to run him out of business. I would tell him that I couldn't sign off on something that had a mistake, so he told me that if I wanted to fix the problem I should go through the box of discarded repro from past issues and find the word spelled correctly. I then read through pages of old stories trying to find one word. Once I found it, I would have to wax the old one, cut out the word and then Milton would perform surgery on the board to replace the offending word with the correct one. After the first time, every subsequent time I brought him corrections he would argue with me that no one would notice, but it wasn't about our readers, it was about *me* noticing it. Why was I bothering to proofread if he wasn't going to fix the mistakes that I found? Eventually I started fixing the boards myself and I wouldn't even bother to tell him. Sometimes when I'd point out a mistake, he would blame me—after all, I wrote every goddamn word of that magazine. No one is always perfect at proofreading, not even the *New York Times*. One big problem was that sometimes the people who set our type inserted their own mistakes that would get past me, or I would submit the correction and they would neglect to make it and I wouldn't catch it until the last possible minute.

Nine months into the job I was able to convince Milton that I could save him some money if he would buy just one Mac. I could eliminate the cost of typesetting, do everything in-house and fix problems instantly.





Getting paid happened so irregularly that when it did happen, I would take pictures to document it.

I found a used Performa, monitor and keyboard at a repair shop and I was ecstatic. It was slower than the computer I had at home, but it was much faster than the IBM piece of shit. I retired that dinosaur to Norma, the bookkeeper, who had no idea how to use it. Then old Lillian decided to retire and there was one

less person on the payroll. A few months later, Milton let Felicia go and then I really was doing everything for *Greetings* all by myself.

I didn't realize how bad off the company was financially until my paychecks started to bounce. When it happened three weeks in a row, I told Norma, the bookkeeper, that not only did I expect to be paid immediately but I expected the company to reimburse me for the bounced check fees. After a few more weeks, everyone's checks were bouncing regularly. It got to the point where it wasn't funny at all, it was just depressing. I stopped depositing my paychecks and started going directly to the bank to cash them. Most of the time they would tell me that there wasn't enough money in the account and I should come back later. Every payday became this sick inside joke where Norma would whisper to me that there was only enough money in the account for half of us to get paid. On the weeks she told me, I got paid, and when she was mad at me, I didn't get paid at all.

There was one stretch where I didn't get paid five weeks in a row. At that point I went to Milton and told him that unless he paid me, I was not coming to work anymore. He yelled at me and said that I was being disloyal and I told him that his empty promises were not going to pay my rent and that he had better sort out the company's financial problems before it went completely sour.

The highlight of my career at *Greetings* was when I was invited and sent press passes to the Louie Awards, which are the greeting-card equivalent of the Oscars. It was hosted by Jerry Stiller and Anne Meara at the Marriott Marquis in Times Square. Everyone in the industry was there, seats were expensive and I was representing the industry's only trade magazine. They wanted me to vote on the winners, like I was a member of the greeting card academy. I remember being excited to go because I thought I would meet all these people that I had written good things about and they would want to know me because I could give them press. I was starving when I got there and when I sat at my seat they brought me a slab of cold, rare steak and a few pieces of asparagus. I hadn't had red meat in a few months but that night I was so hungry that I actually had two bites of it. It was disgusting and bloody and it was the last time I ever ate beef in my life. No one knew who I was or even cared; they were there hoping to win some stupid fucking award. An hour into it, I could tell that Juli was miserable and just as hungry as I was, so we left and took a cab to Empire Wok, our favorite Chinese place.

Shortly after the awards, Alan got fired, though I never learned why. It might have been because Milton was always yelling at him to go out into the market to drum up business and instead Alan sat in a bar around the corner and got drunk by himself. Milton found a guy named Dean who was interested in buying *IFN* and he came on board to see if he could turn it around. Before he joined us he had worked for a few tabloids and made a ton of money putting together those little books you see in the supermarket

checkout aisle about horoscopes, the Bible, talking to your pets or losing weight. He made money on every single one of those things and told me he never had to work again.

Barbara started complaining to Milton that she couldn't sell any ads because everyone in the industry thought *Greetings* was a joke. A few weeks later, as I was working my ass off on our next issue, he told me that he was going to pull the plug on *Greetings*. He fired Barbara and then it was just me, Milton, Katie, Norma, Rita and Dean. Katie and I got along really well with Dean and for a while we thought he might actually start a new magazine, hire us and let Milton drown. Privately, Dean told me and Katie that he had discovered that the company owed more than three times what it was worth. Dean was really good at selling ads and for a while Katie and I did *IFN* together. We made the best of a bad situation, but as it got worse and worse and our paychecks continued to bounce, we both started to look elsewhere.

Katie had better luck than I did and left *IFN* for its main competitor, *BFLA* (*Body Fashions Intimate Apparel*). I kept in touch with her and always asked her to get me a job so I could escape, too, but it wasn't happening. I was suddenly the editor, designer, proofreader, market guy and photographer for *IFN*. Instead of boiling down press releases about cards, I boiled down press releases about bras and underwear. I had to use words like "flirty" in a sentence on a regular basis. Milton hired a girl named Maria whose resume had spelling errors but she was below me on the getting-paid ladder. When her first check bounced, she came to me wondering what happened. I played dumb because I didn't want her to leave, forcing me to do it by myself.

The company went into a slow downward spiral over the next few months. Dean couldn't negotiate with Milton because Milton thought that *IFN* was worth something. Dean's offers were more in line with what the paper was actually worth and since Milton was in his 80s, it would be in his best interests to take whatever sum he was offered and retire in peace. The stubborn old man wouldn't budge an inch and after many very heated and loud arguments, mediation, negotiation and then more arguments, Dean left. I was starting to feel like I was on a sinking ship and everyone else was running for the lifeboats while I continued to play my fiddle.

Each issue had fewer and fewer ads, came out later and later, and we had to switch printers for each job because we couldn't pay any of them. Every call that came in was a creditor looking for money. When we tried to get a new printer, they would ask us for credit references and we had none. We were burning every single bridge we had. I kept looking for a job but I had no luck whatsoever. It was really pathetic. I started calling Dean to see if he needed an assistant or if he needed help finding something else to buy but he had returned to his easy life in the suburbs. I was like the sad puppy in the pound that he couldn't save and I know he felt for me but there was nothing anyone could do.

One sunny day I was sitting at the computer working on a layout for *IFN* when I heard some people at the



REV. CHRIS KORDA of the Church of Euthanasia, explaining his beliefs at his booth.

There were also a few people who were shocked by the response that they got from the masses wandering the Javits. The Rev. Chris Korda of the Church of Euthanasia knew he was going to get a reaction from most people. His booth offered an aerial view of a graveyard beneath a banner displaying their motto, "Save the planet, kill yourself." They displayed their wares in spinner racks, offering stickers and posters celebrating cannibalism, abortion and suicide. "Most people that come by can't believe it," he said, "and the ones that get it, either think it's a joke or wish it was. Some people have been really positive, and we have done a lot of business here so far." So someone expecting to just shock people walked away with an armload of contracts and orders.

Here's the only time I've been enough of a tool to write about myself in the third person, but Milton told me that I couldn't say that "I" had been a judge, but it should be "our own" Joshua Saitz. What a fucking dick! I wrote about what I was interested in, though.

and benches. There were also four awards given out for booth design, judged by our own market editor, Joshua Saitz, Greg Gorman, president of GMG Design, and Chris Gigly, associate editor of *Gift & Stationery Business*. Together they chose

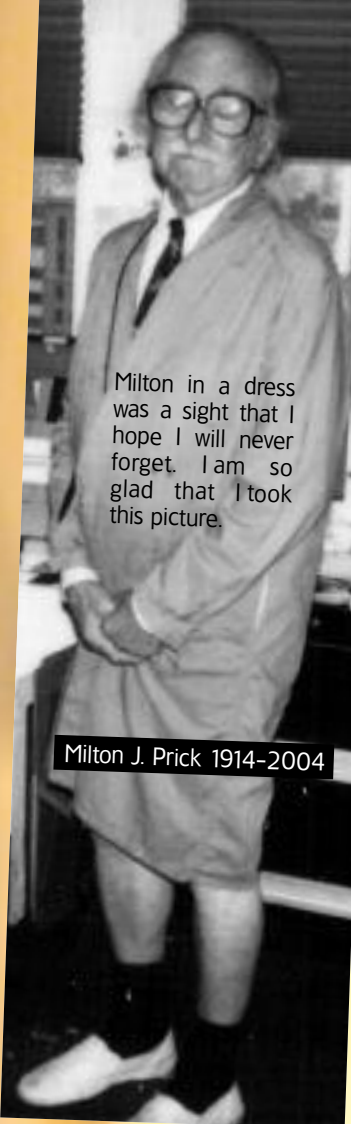
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GREETINGS
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JOSHUA SAITZ

307 FIFTH AVENUE
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016



Milton in a dress was a sight that I hope I will never forget. I am so glad that I took this picture.

Milton J. Prick 1914-2004

front door. I kept on working because I didn't know what else to do. When I looked up from my desk to see what was going on there was a black woman with a gun standing right next to me. She ordered me to step away from the computer and to keep my hands where she could see them. I immediately thought that it was a robbery, which made me laugh out loud. I was thinking, "Go ahead and clean us out. Here, take this broken down old hand-waxer and this piece-of-shit typewriter!" She didn't think anything was funny and told me to stop laughing. She reached into her coat and showed me an IRS badge. She said that the IRS was seizing the company for not paying its payroll taxes. We might be able to dodge printers, vendors and customers, but you cannot screw the government or the mob because they have guns. I immediately told the woman that the computer didn't belong to the company, it was my personal computer that I had loaned to the company because we couldn't afford a computer. She said that was fine and I could come back and get it in a few days, but for now they were here to secure the premises and shut us down. I figured the last three paychecks I had been holding were going to bounce and the computer might be worth at least one worthless paycheck if I could sell it.

A few days later I got a call from Milton's daughter, who told me that she knew that I had the company's computer and Milton wanted it for himself so he could continue to make a living as a writer. In the entire time I worked there he never

even learned how to turn the computer on, much less use it. He had used the same electric typewriter for sixty years but he hadn't been clever enough to tell the IRS the typewriter was his. She said she was going to tell the IRS that I had stolen it and they would file criminal charges against me. I wiped out the entire computer and left it with only a crippled system folder and a text editor. All the software was stuff I had purchased for my own use and if they wanted everything to be on the up and up, I thought it was my responsibility to remove all unauthorized software. There was also no way in hell I was going to just give him my only severance. I dropped the computer off at her apartment and made her sign a statement saying that she and Milton knew that the computer belonged to the IRS and that they were taking the property to return to the IRS to be liquidated to pay our payroll taxes. I still have that note and I don't know why I can't throw it away. I was so pissed off at Milton for taking the only thing I had to show for all my work. I had taken so much abuse over the years and I had given so much to the company and all I was left with was a sour taste in my mouth and three bad checks. That cocksucker dragged us all down with him and I hated his fucking guts for doing it. He knew how bad it was, he knew the IRS was coming, he knew that the company was about to go under and he didn't do anything about it. He could have just sold the thing to Dean for a few bucks but instead, all he had to show for his seventy-plus years at work was one crappy old Performa and whatever office supplies he had stolen.

After the IRS shut down my office, I really didn't know what I was going to do with my life

or my time. I had always enjoyed writing but I didn't think there was any room for creative writing and making money at the same time. To put it another way, no one was going to pay me to be creative, they would only pay me to waste my writing talent on ridiculous nonsense. I sent out hundreds of resumes and made dozens of phone calls, all desperately trying to at least get my foot in the door. I really was a miserable failure at finding a job *and* keeping a job.

Instead of getting upset about it as I had before, I took advantage of the uncontested unemployment checks and my rage at the world and finished writing and designing the first issue of my zine. It was in the depths of that spell of unemployment, when I really felt, well, unemployable, that I vented my anger and overwhelming frustration by writing essays. It worked very well as a catharsis and I started to feel better about the job search. I was very excited about the zine but I couldn't print it because being unemployed means you can't spend \$2,000 to print 1,000 copies of a stupid zine.

Strike Three The Bonaduce Beatdown

Everyone I spoke to about finding a job told me that my best chance for finding work was to network with people who worked where I wanted to work, but I had no connections anywhere. My friends all had jobs in other fields. My brother got me a few freelance design jobs, but not enough to sustain me. I complained to anyone who would listen that I couldn't find a job but it didn't matter. Every day I would wake up, work on a zine that I never thought I'd be able to print, and then send out resumes. When I was about a month away from finishing the zine, Bonaduce (sounds like Bonna-douche-y) called me. He had taken a job as the production manager for the *New York Press*, which is exactly like the *Village Voice*, only obnoxiously and reflexively conservative instead of liberal. Bonaduce said that he might be able to give me some freelance work if I thought I could handle the pressure of a big time production department. I couldn't tell if he was trying to compliment me or insult me, but he was always deliberately hard to read. He said his employers wanted to pay someone \$15 an hour, but he would tell them I deserved \$18 an hour and try to get it for me. He also insinuated that if he could get me \$18 that I ought to thank him by giving him a kickback in the form of free drinks whenever he wanted and I played along. I told him that it sounded fine and I would be interested in coming in to try to do the work, to see if I could "handle it." [If you want to know who I am talking about, his real name and the back story about our friendship, please see "Who is Bonaduce?" on page 43.]

A few days later I went down to the Puck Building which, for those of you who don't live in New York, is the exterior they use as Grace's office on *Will & Grace*. I am sure some of you are either muttering "fag!" or "I was taking him seriously until he said he watched *Will & Grace*." Well, just because I know the building doesn't mean I watch the show, but I do, actually, watch the show, but not very often. My sister got me into it when we were visiting her in LA and she explained all the characters and was so into it that my wife and I humored her and watched it with her. My wife and I did enjoy it when we watched it later and even if you think it's a bad sitcom, it's better than a lot of other ones that are popular. I like it because it's funny and because it makes gay guys seem much less threatening than



A hot man named Gale. Love the shirt, too, Gale!

scare mongers would have you believe they are. I also watch *Queer as Folk*, which is less funny and much filthier, but that is also one of those shows that's so gay it's over the top and I love the idea that people accidentally come across it and are profoundly offended by everything they see. It's entertaining, stylish and does occasionally have a little lesbo action for the guys, so it's not totally gay. My wife is also so fucking hot over Gale Harold, the straight star of the show (see picture at left), that just watching him fuck strange guys in Babylon gets her all worked up and I get the fringe benefits. Just like guys enjoy the lesbo porn, my wife digs the man on man action and anything that turns her on is to my benefit.

Jeez. My tangents are getting out of control. Puff puff pass. Thank you. The office was a disaster, there were no extra chairs and they gave me the second-shittiest

computer I'd ever used, but it was a job. I needed the money, so I didn't want to act like anything was a problem. The production staff included Giselle, early 20s, pierced lip, butch lesbian, Cuban, I think. I doubt she remembers my ethnic heritage either, so take your racism accusations and shove them up your WHITE ass. That's right, white boy, I know you want to hide your racism and hypocrisy by trying to point at mine, but I've never discriminated against anyone based on their race, just based on their looks, religion or intelligence. Gabe was a recent college grad who was a heshner from Long Island, but on Long Island we call people like Gabe either a "burnout" or "metalhead." He was also some kind of latino, but he didn't care that much about it, meaning he didn't always pronounce Spanish words with a Spanish accent, which is about the stupidest fucking thing I've ever heard, and it happens all the time on TV. Should we all pronounce Alabama like they do in Alabama? Man, that's retarded. Michael Gentile was the art director and one of the few original employees to come from Baltimore with Russ Smith, the paper's owner, who wrote long, pointless, rambling editorials for the paper under the name "Mugger." Karen Chu was quiet, smart and the only other production person. She was also the nicest person who worked there. After I'd been there for a while as a freelancer, Karen left the *Press* to work for 1-800-POSTCARDS, which was founded and owned by James Morel from the zine *POPSmear*. Bonaduce seemed really bitter when Karen left and told me horrible stories about James that I wasn't sure if I should believe. I won't even share them because they're pretty slanderous and probably made up.

My job was to design new ads or modify existing ads for the paper. The local clubs faxed us a list of their bands and times and we'd update the ad for each week's issue. Sometimes we'd be asked to design a new ad from scratch and that was about the extent of our creative input. It was easy because the work was regular and no one was going to die if we didn't finish all the ads in the inbox before closing time. There was always tomorrow. After a few weeks, the whole office moved to Seventh Avenue, in the fur district, which is a much shittier neighborhood. The new office had no character at all; it was a big, bland office space with fluorescent lights and metal blinds. The upside was that it was walking distance from my apartment, so I not only got to avoid the train every day, but I also got to sleep in a little later, which is always something I'm after.

When I worked with Bonaduce, we often socialized in bars after work, but he was a much more serious consumer of alcohol than me. Like most people who drink regularly, he would never say he had a drinking problem—he would say that he's just a "social drinker," which is incredibly ironic considering how anti-social he actually is. At this point I might say, "Who am I to judge?" and then I reply, "You do a zine! That's your non-paying job!" Lest anyone think I'm casting stones, I smoke a lot of pot, so feel free to use this against me when I run for president. Many nights after work, a group of us would go to a bar that was located around the corner from the office. The crowd was usually the advertising sales guys, a couple of the less pretentious writers and the production nerds like me. Oftentimes I felt like I was a cog in this disgusting, sleazy machine but I still went. [see "I Was A Pimp" on page 44]

I wanted to be a social, outgoing guy, but I am no longer a good drinker. From fifteen to about twenty-five I was reasonably good with alcohol, usually vodka. After a while I started to experience a lot of uncomfortable side effects. Sometimes it would impair my breathing, it often made my nose congested and I always ended up feeling slightly nauseous or headachy. After many incidents where I was filled with regret after having even one drink, I told my wife that I am not allowed to drink anymore because it's not good for me. Occasionally I will want to get some girlish drink when we're at a shitty chain like Friday's and very rarely I enjoy a fine imported beer like Grolsch, but it's just not worth it for me. When I was out with Bonaduce, he had a certain unspoken etiquette about buying other people drinks that I never fully grasped. I just offered to pay every now and again, but there was some ratio of drinks he was supposed to buy, the boss was supposed to buy and the number the bartender was supposed to comp him or comp the room to encourage their patronage. It was all part of Bonaduce's weird drinking ritual, but it was one of those things that I never cared about enough to understand.

I went out drinking with my co-workers for as long as I could but it got to be too much for me. Maybe you can make the sound of a whip in your own mind, but a lot of the times Juli would want me to come home and hang out with her, rather than hang out in a bar until midnight during the week.

That's really what I wanted to do anyway, so I gradually began extricating myself from the bar scene that formed regularly after work. Bonaduce and his girlfriend socialized with us on other occasions. Mexican in their neighborhood, Chinese in Chelsea (though they both said the food was shitty, the restaurant also gave away shitty, but free, wine, which was always worth a trip to them). The problem was that we didn't want to wash down greasy chicken knuckles and beaks with astringent. Call us crazy, but my beloved Empire Wok makes the best Chinese food in the world so there is no reason to ever go anywhere else if you're in New York. I am dead serious. If you're the best, you don't have to worry about the competition. Bitch, do your song, keep telling yourself that you was a mom. Man, I fucking love Eminem.

Juli and Bonaduce got along really well because they both have a kind of mercenary mindset. There was a lot of weird stuff that went on with Bonaduce and his drinking, like when we went out to a bar together one night after work and he told me that if I was ever asked, I was working late with him, not sitting in a bar at 6PM on a Tuesday. Or the fact that he often would get a six-pack for the office toward the end of the day and two other people would get one beer apiece out of the deal while he had the rest. It was nice to be friends with another couple who were our age and seemed committed to each other, but we definitely had different relationships. My wife has been the most important person in my life since I met her in 1994 and I would be lost, miserable and probably quite dangerous if she weren't around to beat it down to clown town. Bonaduce liked the idea that he had taken his girlfriend's virginity but joked at length that her pussy smelled bad, which made everyone uncomfortable. It wasn't just once, either, it was something he seemed fond of saying because after the third time he told us, his girlfriend gave him a look like, "Not this again." If it's true, now's not the time to bring it up, and if it's not true, you really ought to be saying things to try to get yourself more pussy, not less. She would respond by saying that his semen tasted like hot sake, which I explained by saying that all of his fluids are probably pickled from his liquor consumption. After that I told Juli that if anyone asked, she should say that my semen tasted like a kiss from a baby with a hint of cotton candy. She wouldn't play along.

Bonaduce and I worked well together but he was always keen to subtly remind me that he was the production manager and I was just a production associate. He even told me that he was the alpha dog of this production pack and took that role seriously. He bragged about how he punked out his dog Buddy and that Buddy was actually grateful to know his place. I think sometimes Bonaduce confused Buddy the dog with his buddy Josh and as you might guess from the tone of this zine, I consider myself unpunkable, if that's even a word. Lots of times at work, he would hand me a pile of shit to do that he was really supposed to do and then he would leave to go chat with other people. Nothing irritates me more than working hard while other people are goofing off. Don't get me wrong, I love goofing off if that's what we're all into or the boss is gone. I also know that most of the time at work we're all supposed to be working together toward a common goal, in this case, putting together a reactionary, right-wing newspaper that was full of uninformed opinions and ads for whores. Oh, and they always had an astrology column, though they may have been pretending they were running it for the sake of irony. I cannot fathom how it is that people take any newspaper seriously that has either whore ads or horoscopes. I don't need the well-reasoned opinions and editorial insights of snake oil salesman and pimps.

I disagreed with the paper almost every time I read it and after a while I didn't even bother to read it. Except for the brilliant Jonathan Ames and the letters pages, the paper is irrelevant. I actually wrote letters to the writers telling them how much they sucked, the *Press* gladly published them and other employees came to me and told me that they agreed with me. Once I was standing at the urinal a few days after a letter of mine had been published and Russ came up to the urinal next to mine. As I was peeing, I did exactly what you're supposed to do at a urinal: I stared straight ahead, kept my mouth shut and I saw a man about a horse. Russ tapped me on the shoulder and told me that he loved my letter and I should keep up the good work. He kept talking to me as he peed and he put the pen he was carrying in his mouth. When he was done peeing, he took the pen out of his mouth and left the bathroom without washing his hands. I remember it so clearly because I was shocked.

Who is Bonaduce?

I do this zine specifically for people who don't give a fuck about zines, but a lot of people in the world of zines know each other socially because they often have a lot in common. I've befriended dozens of fellow self-publishers and met maybe ten of them in person. It was sometimes a lot of fun, it was more often a tremendous disappointment, and twice it helped me get a job I would otherwise never have gotten at a time when I desperately needed a job. I discovered Jeff Koyen's zine *Crank* when I was living in San Francisco and immediately felt like I had been ripped off. I had never had anything published, but I was sure that this guy had read my work and was ripping me off. Then I read a little further and realized it wasn't me at all. I wrote the editor a fan letter and he basically blew me off. It was exactly the kind of response I would've written if I had gotten such a suckass letter, but the thing is, I had always wanted to be a writer and write angry, funny things and see them in print but I knew no one would pay to print them. Over the course of the next few months we became very friendly and when I said that I was moving back to New York City to look for a job in publishing, he said he was moving to New York, too.

We continued to e-mail back and forth after we both moved to NYC. He was happy being a freelancer and I had my shitty job working for Milton. One day I saw an ad in the *Village Voice* looking for contestants for a new MTV game show. I called the number and left my personal info on the voicemail. I was at work when the contestant recruiter called me. We talked for a few minutes about my background and then she asked if I was willing to take the phone quiz. I said it would be fine, so she asked me a bunch of general knowledge questions. When I was done, she told me that I had gotten only two wrong and they wanted me to come down to try out in person. I immediately e-mailed Bonaduce and told him that he should try out for the show, too. He was the only person I could think of that lived in NYC and knew enough to do well on the show. He said that his memory was damaged by alcohol and he wouldn't even be able to handle the phone quiz. Thinking it would be my chance to do a good deed for a friend, I sent him a list of all the questions I had been asked along with all the answers, figuring the people at MTV would re-use the same questions for everyone. He e-mailed me a few days later to say he breezed through the phone quiz thanks to me and he was going down to MTV's offices to try out in person.

For a while I thought that there was a good chance I'd end up competing against him on the show. I went down to MTV and kicked ass at the live audition and a few days later he did the same. We were both told that we might get a call to be on the show, which to me meant that they thought I was smart, but not pretty enough for their stupid show. A few days later, Bonaduce got the call and was told he was going to be one of the first contestants on the show. I was excited because I thought he would return the favor of giving me the inside dirt about what went on at the show.

Days before he was scheduled to do his shows, I got a call from Alyssa at MTV (see "More Savant Than Idiot," in *NegCap* #1) saying that they liked me but I wasn't going to be on the show. I was really bummed out because not only did I really want to be on the show, I felt like I had given my slot away to Bonaduce.

A few days later Bonaduce e-mailed me that he was going to do the show and bragged that he was going to kill. I wished him luck but didn't tell him that I hadn't been picked. Then I got another call from Alyssa saying that they wanted me to be an alternate in two weeks and there was a good chance someone was going to drop out. The show was unique in that they had four contestants who played for five days in a row. At the end of each episode, the person with the highest score got a chance to win a special prize by answering very difficult questions in their particular "savant" category, which was Ridley Scott movies for me and *Columbo* for Bonaduce. At the end of the week, the two contestants with the highest total score from previous days would play against each other for a two-week African safari.

When Bonaduce told me he was done with his shows (they tape two shows the first day, three the next) I had a million questions about the set, the host, the structure, the level of the questions and everything else that happened. He didn't want to talk about it. No matter how I asked, he just rebuffed me and said that he hadn't done well. I was shocked, but I also felt like he was somehow mad at me, or blamed me for getting him involved in the first place. After I did my five shows a few days later, I had to tell him that I did pretty well and had won a free week in the Virgin Islands. He seemed even more annoyed with me, so I decided it would be best to just drop it.

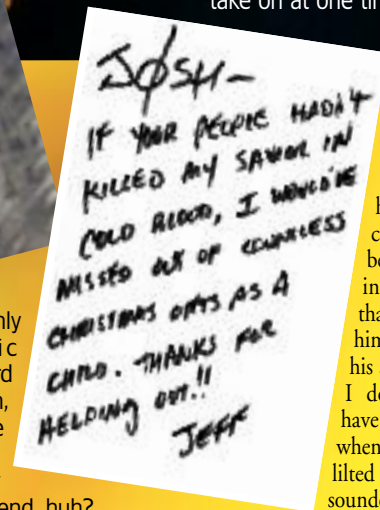
One night he said he was going to be hanging out in a bar with some friends and asked if I wanted to come by to meet him and his girlfriend in person. I was a little nervous because I thought if he was anything like his zine persona, he might want to fight me or hate me because I'm from the suburbs. When I finally got up the nerve to introduce myself, he was very friendly. He was glad to meet me and Juli and we bought him some drinks, which he liked a lot. His girlfriend Amy was nice and she seemed like she'd been dragged to meet too many of the zine people Bonaduce knew. We had a couple of drinks,



Hey Jeff, how many cocks can you take on at one time?



Here's the only anti-Semitic Hanukkah card I've ever gotten, from Bonaduce himself. He does spell my name like a friend, huh?



talked about zines, the newsgroup and spent too much time talking about how we were both computer nerds before there was an internet. The thing that I liked most about him that first night was his speech impediment. I don't know if they have a name for it, but when he spoke he had lilted or flattened l's that sounded a little bit gay and a little bit charming,

It's the same speech impediment that Tom Brokaw and Danny Bonaduce have and most people don't even notice it. For no justifiable reason, I really like speech impediments and girls who wear glasses. My wife has glasses but she doesn't wear them, no matter how much I ask. When I am really stressed I sometimes stutter and whenever I detect something unique in someone else's speech I'll listen for it whenever they talk.

The next day I e-mailed Bonaduce, the alt.zines badass and editor and publisher of the toughest zine in the world. I said that Juli and I had a good time hanging out and we really enjoyed meeting him. I said we would both love to do it again sometime and then made some comment about how I liked his speech impediment, but I didn't know what to call it. I said it was the same one that Danny Bonaduce had. Holy shit, did he take it hard. He went ballistic on me for comparing him to Danny Bonaduce. After that, in my head, I always called him Bonaduce, in the same way that I used to call Milton "sir," while the sarcasm dripped off my words. Clearly, the name stuck.

I am sure in his mind Bonaduce takes full credit for inspiring this zine, but he really doesn't deserve any credit. The first zine that I ever saw—and fell in love with—was John Kelly's *XXX* in 1990. It was that zine's smorgasbord approach to storytelling that originally inspired me to do a zine. I was also influenced by great zines like *Murder Can Be Fun*, *Retard*, *POPSmear*, *Answer Me!* and a few others. While there may be some similarities between this zine and *Crank*, I can assure you that I was like this before I ever saw *Crank*, and before I ever saw *XXX*, and I am not some con man living out my tough-guy fantasies through this zine. I am a real person telling real stories in this zine and I say it over and over because I don't want the fact that zines like mine are frauds to ever make anyone think that this zine is a fucking fraud *because it's not*.

Outside of work, Bonaduce and I talked about all kinds of stuff, from music to movies to zines. He introduced me to Seth Friedman of *Factsheet 5* when Seth was in town and privately told me he thought Seth was a creep. It made me wonder what he said about me behind my back, but since he seemed to like me, and Seth did seem a little creepy, I didn't dwell on it. Bonaduce was a big fan of science fiction and we saw *Event Horizon* together because our girlfriends would never see a movie like that. When he called me and invited me to see Kevin Costner's new flick *The Postman* I told him that I had read it was one of the worst movies ever made. He didn't care because as he put it, he would "see anything that was post-apocalyptic." I don't remember him writing any witty articles in his zine about *that* movie. He and I always planned to see a Rush tribute band called Power Windows but he never had enough follow through to commit to a date even though it was *his idea*. I am embarrassed to admit that I almost saw a Rush cover band [my wife is snickering in my head as I type this], but I do admit it, so feel free to goof on me. I know I would.

Bonaduce asked me and Juli to join him and his girlfriend on a weekend trip to Atlantic City and we thought it would be fun because we didn't know many other couples. We went and it was a little uncomfortable because it seemed like the only reason they went there was because if you sat at a machine, a whore would bring you free drinks. It was worth a bus trip for free booze to them, but not to us.

We both got engaged to our girlfriends around the same time and had our weddings planned about a month apart. He was such an insecure loser that he had to spend money he didn't even have to impress people who didn't care about him. He was planning his huge wedding himself [fag!] and when he told me it was going to cost more than fifty grand I thought he was the stupidest person ever. I had recently spent \$2,000 to print my zine but after that, I had no money left over for anything else. I never spend money that I don't have because I'm not a fucking retard. I remember him telling me that he didn't make much more than that in a year and he was going to go into



The first Ex-Mrs. Bonaduce and the one and only Mrs. Saitz drinking cheap domestic beer in our hotel cheap room in beautiful Atlantic City, NJ.

which is exactly the opposite of my idea of a good time. Germans, liquor and meat make me feel very ill at ease in the same way that atheists, pot and pizza make me feel comfortable. The party was dull because it was all Bonaduce's old drinking buddies, and drunk people are

only funny to other drunk people. I tried to drink but it wasn't working out, so when they started their pub crawl, I left. For some reason my wife gets turned on by beer on my breath—maybe because it happens so rarely and she associates me being drunk with the idea that I'll come on to her.

A few days later

Juli and I were shocked when Bonaduce, who is a self-described "Aryan poster boy," had a full-on Jewish ceremony in the Puck Building, just a few floors down from the old *Press* offices. My wife and I are *both* Jews and we were married by a semi-coherent retired priest in the New York New York Hotel/Casino in Las Vegas. Bonaduce's actual wedding ceremony was unique in that it both sucked and blew at the same time, but luckily it didn't last long enough for us to get too bored. When Gabe the heshier showed up in a suit and Giselle the diesel dyke wore a frilly dress I knew I had truly gone through the looking glass. Up was down, night was day and Bonaduce was a big, fat homo instead of a tough, streetwise hardass. He even took weekends off before his wedding so he could take private dance lessons with his fiancée, all so they could have a big gay dramatic first dance at the wedding. Hey Bonaduce, do you see the irony in you calling me a fag and the fact that *you* took *dance lessons* in your spare time? That act alone makes you the biggest pussywhipped fag ever, unless you really wanted to learn to dance, in which case I'd have to assume the divorce was your way of shaving off the "beard."

debt to pay for the wedding. My wife and I planned to go to Las Vegas with less than ten people and spend less than four grand on everything, including hotel, a post-ceremony dinner at a nice restaurant and airfare. I figured we'd make up half of it in gifts from our families and the rest we could float on a credit card for a few months. It was a little more than I had in cash, but not more than I could afford.

Bonaduce invited me to his bachelor party but told me not to mention it to our only straight, male co-worker, Gabe, because he wasn't invited. I couldn't figure out why Gabe wasn't invited, but from the way Bonaduce told me I realized the topic was a little too hot to touch. The party started out at some creepy German beer-and-bratwurst place,

This is one of the many he/she bitches I had in my stable. I gave up the game many years ago, but back in the day, I was mackin' Chelsea to Spanish Harlem, yo. This one here is a two-for-one special if you're into some freaky shit and don't want your lady to know. I am sorry that our production department can't spell transsexual properly, but at the end of the day, it was Bonaduce's responsibility and I refused to have anything to do with the whore ads.

My wife thinks I'm insane when I disassociate like this, but this is literally how I saw my role. I worked at the *New York Press*, an "alternative" newspaper that took paid advertisements from whores. They were technically called "escorts," and most newspapers today have dozens of ads for these so-called "escorts." The whores pay for

I Was a Pimp

these ads with money that they received from the men who fucked them for money. The *Press* was the conduit that brought together hookers and johns and took a cut of the money for facilitating the transaction. When you really look at it, everyone working at these papers is

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About forty minutes into the reception, Juli and I were getting nauseous from the drinks. The ones we got tasted like Stri-Dex mixed with Jonestown Kool-Aid. I had a few hits of ecstasy on me that I had brought in case of emergency, like a spy with a secret stash of cyanide pills. An hour into the reception, which looked more like dress-up day at work but was more boring, it turned into an emergency. Even after the E took effect I was still bored. Juli and I talked to some of the salespeople from the *Press* and the other losers who were stuck at our table. We wanted to be social and interact with other people but it seemed like everyone else was having a contest to see who could get the most shit-faced the fastest. I could tell that Juli really wanted to leave because she didn't know anyone except Bonaduce and his wife, so a room full of drunk people was the last place she wanted to be. I found Bonaduce and gave him a very nice, heartfelt card and a check from me for \$200, more than I had ever given anyone as a gift in my entire life. He was too busy (drunk?) to notice that we left early and we were just glad it was over.

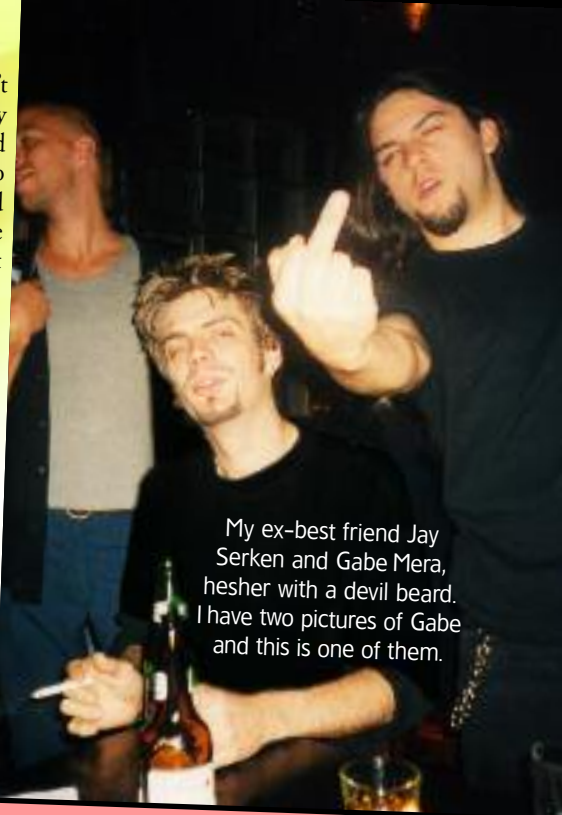
A couple of weeks later, my friend Jay wanted to have a bachelor party for me because he was going to be missing my wedding (see "Dead to Me," on page 48). I wasn't sure if I should invite Gabe or not because I knew I would be inviting Bonaduce and if Bonaduce wanted Gabe excluded from his party, maybe he would get pissed at me for including him at my party. I liked Gabe and figured it was my party and I could invite anyone. I invited both of them because then at least Bonaduce would know one other person besides me and have someone else to talk to.

We started my bachelor party at a bar called Idlewild, which looks like the interior of an airplane, including realistic airplane seats and tiny bathrooms. Everyone kept buying me drinks but I would just take a sip and then sneak off to dump it out. I had never had all my close friends in one place before, so I brought a camera. I tried to take a few pictures but every time the camera came out Bonaduce would cover his face or Gabe would give me the finger until I took the picture. I took the hint and gave up on pictures, but the pictures you're seeing are the only ones I ever took of Gabe and Bonaduce. After a while *mi amigo* Peter decided it was time to go to a strip club and pay to see some new boobs. Bonaduce bailed so he could do some serious drinking and the rest of us headed to Times Square. As we walked, Gabe took me aside and thanked me for inviting him to my bachelor party. I said it was no big deal because we were friends and co-workers. He seemed like he was actually touched and I was surprised that he had any feelings at all. Gabe was obviously hurt that he had been invited to Bonaduce's wedding but not his bachelor party when a guy like Gabe would rather do it the other way around. Wearing a suit and giving a gift isn't his style while getting shit-faced and leering at strippers is what he was born to do. He said that it

seemed like some people in the department didn't like him and his instincts were right. On many occasions away from the office, Bonaduce would tell me that Gabe was an immature dick who needed to grow up already. Even though I agreed with him, I wouldn't have put it that way because everyone is an immature dick when they first get out of college, including both me and Bonaduce.

Gabe started fishing for information from me, trying to figure out if anything bad had been said about him, but I didn't want to upset him or ruin his evening. I told him that everyone liked him and thought he was good at his job but I told him that he was sometimes immature and it would be a smart move to grow up a little. I suggested that he should try not to announce all of his farts in the office. Instead of listening to me, he jumped up and smacked the side of an awning like a kid with ADD. I figured it was a lost cause and moved on. We went to some creepy strip club and after about an hour everyone could tell that I was ready to go. The party broke up after 2AM and I went home.

Over the course of planning our wedding, Juli talked to Bonaduce via e-mail regularly. She invited



My ex-best friend Jay Serken and Gabe Mera, heshier with a devil beard. I have two pictures of Gabe and this is one of them.

The thing is, I have absolutely nothing against hookers, whores or these "escorts" but I certainly have never used their services and I definitely want to avoid being associated with them. I would take ads for actual pornography in this zine, but I would never take a whore ad. I think that prostitution should be legalized and regulated because it is going to exist whether there are laws or not. They don't

call it the oldest profession for nothing. I was just like those women because I was using whatever skills I've acquired and I used them to do things that I didn't always like, just for the money, even when I wasn't in the mood. I worked there and helped them put out their

paper and I took their dirty money because I was another fucking whore myself. I did what they wanted me to do when they paid me. The most ironic thing to me about the dirty whore ads at the *Press* was that the butch lesbian production assistant Giselle was responsible

I Was a Whore

for scanning the nude whore pictures and then placing stars and bars over the clits and tits for publication. A lesbian, being paid to look at naked women, at work! And Bonaduce had a crush on her so she could never get in trouble! Talk about a dream situation for a dyke.

him to our Vegas wedding but he would never give her a straight answer. I wasn't sure if it was because he was cheap, poor from overspending on his own wedding or because he didn't like me, but it didn't matter. As the date got closer he gave her some lame excuse about the paper not giving him enough time off and she let him off the hook. I thought at some point during my bachelor party he might have said something to me about not coming to my wedding, but every time I brought it up he would bristle like I was putting him on the spot so I gave up.

We got married on June 20, 1998 and the wedding was short and sweet. We spent four days in Vegas with our closest friends and it was a blast. When we got back on Sunday night, we were exhausted but happy. People wanted to get us gifts but we told everyone that came with us that their company was their gift and it was all that we wanted. I knew I would have to stop all non-essential spending for a few months so I could pay for my wedding and I was even thinking about working some extra overtime so I could pay off my credit card bill faster.

My normal work schedule included one weekend day to do a final push on the ads and a ridiculously long shift on Monday, which was press day.

Depending on how organized Bonaduce was, we could be done by midnight or 5AM. No one was supposed to leave until the last board was out the door. After the brutal Monday, everyone in production had Tuesday off. I had planned my wedding so I could miss at least one of the awful Mondays, which were draining me of my will to live.

The Monday after my wedding, I spent most of the day in bed with my new bride and it was the most peaceful and relaxing Monday I'd had in months. It was so wonderful to be away from work with Juli and she was really happy, too. On Tuesday I got a call from Bonaduce saying that he needed me to come in. I thought maybe the office was going to surprise me and congratulate me on getting married. Then I thought maybe Bonaduce wanted to give me a wedding gift, especially since I'd been so generous with him a few weeks earlier. When I got to the office he was sitting at his desk, which was literally right before mine. I didn't even go to my desk because as soon as he saw me, he stood up and told me to follow him.

As we walked through the sales department, he told me that Ron Mann, one of the ad sales guys that he hated, had been fired while I was away and

he seemed almost giddy about it. He led me to Ron's now-empty office and sat behind the desk. I sat in front of him and asked him what was up. He wasn't smiling and said, "There's been a problem. You said something to Gabe before you left that made him think that no one here likes him. I found out that he was looking for a job because of what you said and I can't have this upsetting the production department. It's a professional decision." My mind was racing through the night of the bachelor party. Grow up? Was that what set Gabe off? I immediately apologized for any waves I had caused but I couldn't think of anything that I had said that would make Gabe want to leave.

He said that his mind was made up and that he had no choice but to let me go. At that point, I was literally shocked. I said that I didn't think this was something that had to cost me my job, especially since Gabe wasn't actually leaving, he had just thought about it, like everyone else who has a annoying job does. He didn't care. He wasn't even slightly sympathetic, he was just icy. I started thinking about Juli and what she would say if I told her that I got fired and wouldn't have any money to pay for our wedding. Then I thought, "Why is he throwing away my friendship for Gabe?" It made absolutely no sense to me. I literally pleaded for my job but Bonaduce didn't give a shit. He was just cold and hard and unfeeling. When I realized that there was no way I was going to get through to him, I couldn't believe it. It was literally unbelievable to me. I knew I'd never be friends with him again. He chose to think the worst of me and punish me for something I didn't do. I knew he was dead to me, but unlike most other people who are dead to me by my choice, he had done it all to himself. It was like he had invited me in to watch as he shot himself in the head.

As I stood up to leave he said that he had taken all of my stuff off the computer and put it on Zip disks. When I got to my desk there was a huge stack of about thirty Zips and I realized why he had stopped me from getting to my desk. I imagined him a few days earlier, while I was getting married in Vegas, sitting at my desk, reading all of my personal stuff, knowing full well that as soon as I returned from my wedding, he was going to fire me. I thought about him telling everyone else in the department, but I couldn't imagine what bullshit story he told them to make them see things his way. I really thought I was going to break at that moment. I had no idea what to say or do. I didn't even get to say good-bye to anyone because everyone else in the department was off, which is exactly why he had me come in on Tuesday. Then when everyone came in the next day, I would just be gone, forgotten forever. I told Bonaduce that I would have to come back on Saturday to get my stuff, when the office was empty. I looked him in the eyes one last time before I left to see if there was a glimmer of humanity in him but there was nothing left for me, so I quietly walked out of the office by myself and walked home.

When I called Juli from a pay phone outside she was shocked, too. Not once did she say, "What did you say to Gabe?" because she knows me better than that. I would never have said, "Gabe, I have to tell you that Bonaduce, our immediate supervisor, thinks you're an immature asshole metalhead and he didn't invite you to his bachelor party because he thought you'd ruin it." I am only that honest and cruel in this zine, where I am free to say whatever I want. She felt terrible for me and suggested that I write Bonaduce a letter to explain things. I really didn't want to—I remember the look on his face and I remember that he made it very clear that there was no way around it. He had nothing but hate for me and I had no idea why. She said I should do it anyway because she had always found him to be reasonable and then I could say that I had tried *everything*. She said that if I just explained my side in a clear and rational way, he would have to understand and give me my job back. So I sent him an e-mail and he wrote back a few hours later.

Date: Wed, 24 Jun 1998 12:56:40
From: Negative Capability <negative_capability@mindspring.com>
To: Bonaduce <bonaduce@nypress.com>

Dear Bonaduce,

I would really appreciate it very much if you could listen to what I have to say because it's very important. I value our friendship and my work very much and I think this whole thing is a terrible misunderstanding.

I would never say a bad thing about anyone in the department because I really do like hanging out and working with everyone. The one minor problem I did have (with the noise) I resolved by speaking honestly and making my feelings known and working with you to work it out.

I honestly do not know what Gabe was thinking or what he said, but I would like to tell you exactly what happened in an attempt to clear things up. At some point during the evening, we were walking around the streets and Gabe and I were alone behind the rest of the group. He thanked me for inviting him to the bachelor party because as he put it, "Sometimes it seems like people don't like me." The impression that I got was that he was referring to the fact that he wasn't invited to your bachelor party, which is fine with me, I'm just telling you that it seemed to me that he was hurt by it. I told him that I thought he was a cool person and a good friend so of course he'd come to my bachelor party. Since we were opening up a little, he said that he thought I was a cool person and I told him that during that week I was asked to stay home, I felt like he was the only person who was always cool to me (something I said to you at the time). [After a few Mondays in a row sitting at my desk working while Bonaduce flirted with a lesbian and a fat moron named Queen Itchie yelled at the top of her lungs, I complained to Bonaduce, who was supposed to be managing the production. He told me to stay home for a week, like I was the one with the problem.] I also said, in a friendly way, that it would probably help if he grew up a little. I said that sometimes he is a little immature with the burping and farting and also because during the bachelor party he kept jumping up to touch signs and singing some death metal songs to my friends. It wasn't that I was saying anyone in the department or at the party didn't like him, it was a general suggestion that he should just calm down a little and watch what he does. I meant it from the heart because I really like Gabe and I sincerely think that he could benefit from a little maturing. If he took this to mean people at work don't like him, I really am so sorry. I really don't even see how he could make that leap because I was saying it from me and no one else, as a friend. I would certainly hope that if my behavior was bad that someone who was my friend would take me aside, in a friendly way, and gently let me know that I was behaving badly. I got the impression that he took what I was saying to heart because he stopped singing and seemed to calm down. At the end of the night we were all having a great time—so good that he decided to hang out with my friend Jay until 8AM drinking. He didn't seem upset or disturbed, it seemed like he took it like I meant it—a friend helping a friend. While I was saying it to him, he was agreeing with me that he was immature sometimes. He even called me last Tuesday before I left to make plans to hang out with me and never said anything about our conversation again.

As you know, Gabe has a lot of respect for you, and some respect for me, and if I have done anything to change that, I'm really sorry. I swear that I never meant to hurt anyone or change anything, I was just talking man-to-man with a friend of mine at my bachelor party. It was just casual conversation.

I really don't want to badger you or harass you, I just don't want this misunderstanding to cost me my life. I have always been a very loyal person, a hard worker and a good friend and it is very difficult for me to find work. I really love working at the *Press* and I have learned so much so far. I have enormous respect for you, the department and the paper and I'm sorry if it seems otherwise. I'm sorry if I have caused you or the department any undue suffering, I didn't mean to. I really would like to work with you to resolve this because I think just firing me won't change anything and will just make things worse for everyone because I'm sure Gabe wasn't hoping to get me fired. And I know that I wasn't trying to cause trouble or create tension in the department by talking to Gabe. I know I don't always do the smartest thing, but in this case I really didn't mean to involve anyone else, I was just trying to help Gabe feel better and be a better person and that's all.

Thanks for reading this.

Sincerely,
Josh

Date: Wed, 24 Jun 1998 14:41:47
From: Bonaduce <bonaduce@nypress.com>
To: negative_capability@mindspring.com

Josh-

I won't discuss the Gabe matter any further. I'm sorry if that sounds impersonal and cold, but it's a professional decision. As I said earlier today, I am restructuring the department, and there's little I can do to change the way things have developed. To bring our friendship into this matter is both unfair and inappropriate. I particularly resent your inclusion of the phrase "I just don't want this misunderstanding to cost me my life."

If you need a reference, please feel free to use my name.

Bonaduce

At no point during our conversation did he say anything about “restructuring the department,” but that’s a good story to tell everyone else. Things hadn’t “developed” in the weekend I got married to the point where I was no longer needed, especially because in the last few months I was there I had moved from doing ads to designing editorial pages and entering editorial changes—something no one else was doing. People in the world of zines knew we were friends and would often put our zines in the same category. One retard actually reviewed both of our zines together on one page, calling me Bonaduce’s “mentee,” which is absolute nonsense. Even though Bonaduce gave me permission to use his name, I never thought I would have to. I thought he was smart enough to keep his mouth shut. After he fired me, when people talked to him about me, he told two different lies. The first was that we stopped being friends because, and I quote, “Josh and I were friendly for a bit. Then, apparently, the first issue of his zine came out and I was so jealous of his brilliance that I could no longer be his friend. But, I guess that’s what happens when you make the mistake of befriend your fans: They get hurt when you fail to recognize the genius they so desperately believe they possess.” My zine is better than his because it’s the truth, not some Walter Mitty-ish fantasy, like his zine is. He took me out for drinks when *Crank* #6 came out and has since publicly admitted that it wasn’t his finest work. When I told him I was working on a zine of my own, he was so into the idea that he designed an icon that I used throughout my first issue. I even returned the favor of buying drinks and handing out free copies when *NegCap* #1 came out and after he had had a chance to read it he said it was “brilliant” and said, “Mazel Tov,” which is something that even my Jewish friends don’t say. We were much more than friendly and he knows that my zine had absolutely nothing to do with my work at the *Press*. I even named his always-promised *Columbo*-themed zine, “One-Eyed Jacks.” You’ll always owe me for that, Bonaduce.

On the alt.zines newsgroup a thread developed about how enthusiastic Bonaduce was to sell out to the purveyors of liquor and cigarettes and he took the opportunity to lie about me a second time and give me another smack across the face in a totally unrelated post by saying, “Furthermore, when *Crank* #7 is ready to be sent I will be offering free copies (via alt.zines) to whoever the fuck wants one, since I’m not making any money on this fucking thing anyway. And that even goes for you, Ninjalicious, despite the fact that you think I’m an asshole (which you believe only because of an association with a certain zine editor who broke down in tears in front of his coworkers when I fired him for incompetence).” Let’s look at the facts: I was fired on a Tuesday, when the production department is off, after the long press day on Monday, and Bonaduce knows it—he’s just full of shit about any co-workers seeing me.

I openly admit that I got upset when I saw all the Zip disks on my desk, but when your close friend fires you for no good reason, how are you supposed to react? Was I supposed to thank him? One of my closest friends had actually fired me and cut me out of his life forever in one fell swoop, in a ridiculous fit of arrogance. Bonaduce is right that I *was* friends with Ninjalicious for a while, but it’s much more likely that Ninj hates Bonaduce because of his boorish behavior on the newsgroup and an interview Ninj’s friend Jim Munroe had done with Bonaduce. I wish I could say that I *made* Ninj think Bonaduce was an asshole, but Ninj and I will agree that I am not that influential. I had absolutely nothing to do with this conversation on the newsgroup but Bonaduce actually has the nerve to blatantly lie and say 1) that I cried in front of my co-workers when I never saw anyone but him that day and 2) that he fired me for incompetence. I can’t imagine a single person who has seen my zine or read my writing who would think that I was so “incompetent” that I couldn’t type in the names of the bands playing at CBGB’s for their weekly ad. I’ve been working in QuarkXPress since 1989 and no one that I have ever worked for has ever had the retarded audacity to lie and say that I’m incompetent, but if you wanted me to beat your fucking ass into the ground for lying about me like an insecure little bitch, here you go, asshole.

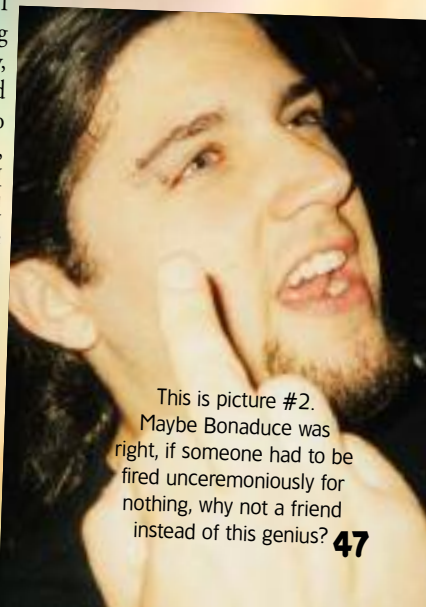
Listen, Bonaduce, I know you’re going to see this and I know you’ve read all my zines. I warned you in the editorial in *NegCap* #2 to keep your stupid fucking mouth shut and let it all heal but you had to stay in your phony persona and be a fucking asshole. You had to *lie to strangers who don’t even like you* and *brag* that you made me cry. You had to *gloat over my misfortune* when I was a good friend and good co-worker. You had to start some shit with me when you know in your heart of hearts that you were just wrong—you were hideous and hateful to me, and you were worse to your wife, and neither one

of us deserved it. You had to take pride in the fact that you fired your friend when he came back from his wedding, which is not something you should be proud of. Well, fuck you, you stupid, selfish, arrogant, ignorant, divorced cocksucker. Fuck your attitude, fuck your claims of loyalty, sincerity and honesty when we all know it’s a load of crap, and fuck you for being such a hateful piece of shit. Your litany of lies ends here. I never thought I’d have to do this to you because I thought you were smarter than that, but I was *very* wrong about you. You’re a poisonous viper and you can only bite me once. You deserve every misery you get. If you are still dumb enough to think about giving me some editorial payback and make up some phony justification for behaving like a piece of shit, just remember that I know (and remember) a lot more about you than you do about me. I haven’t even scratched the surface of what I know about you, your zine, your lies and your life and if you ever utter my name or mention me again, expect every inside piece of dirt I have on you to be immediately sent to every single person dumb enough to think you’re their friend. You know I will do it, too, because I’m incredibly vindictive and I have been so thoroughly wronged by you. I know every dirty secret you told me about Russ from the *Press* and every shitty thing you ever said about everyone we worked with. Remember when you called your boss’s wife a “trophy” and his kids “spoiled brats”? How about the time you made jokes to the whole department about our mutual friend Michael Gentile when he got drunk, fell down some stairs and ended up in the hospital? Let’s not forget that I taped your entire five-days-in-a-row losing run on *Idiot Savants* where you looked like a total idiot, not a savant. I’m ready to convert it to DVD, and blanks are so cheap that it wouldn’t cost me much to expose you as the stupid douchebag you are. I’d love to give away copies so the world can see what an alcohol-addled, Bonaduce-sounding retard you are in real life. Man, that felt good.

I knew that there was no way that the *Press* would try to fight my unemployment claim because then they would have to give a justifiable reason for my termination. Maybe Bonaduce thought he was being nice to me by not fighting me on the unemployment, but if he had truly wanted to be nice to me he could have said, “I don’t know what you said to Gabe at your bachelor party, but don’t *ever* do that again,” and sent me back to my desk. I don’t know what bullshit story Bonaduce told Russ when he wanted to fire me, but it doesn’t matter. They can all think whatever they want about me because I literally don’t give a shit. I collected my unemployment, started work on my second issue and started sending out resumes again. Juli wasn’t mad at me but she was very sad about the way it ended because it didn’t have to go that way. Her theory is that Bonaduce was really insecure and the more responsibilities I was being given at work, the more he resented hiring me. I was the only person there who had a diverse enough skillset to replace him, even though I would *never* have taken his job out of *loyalty to him*. Even though he offered, I never used his name as a reference because his name is worthless. This is the last time I’ll ever use his name for anything unless he does something really stupid.

I remember we went out for drinks after he had taken the job as production manager and he told me that he was promised that if he could save the paper a certain amount of money over the course of a year, Russ would give him a salary that completely blew me away. I wasn’t sure if I should believe him because he’s a liar, but his goal was to impress me and I was impressed. Five years later I am working as the IT Manager for a small company, making way more than his dream salary and I only have to work forty hours a week. No more working weekends, no more stupid, pointless meetings, no more office politics. I am treated with respect, I do a great job and everyone I work with is glad to have me around. They say that living well is the best revenge, but in this case, giving that stupid cocksucker a long overdue beatdown is a lot more gratifying than living well, but I’ll take both, if you don’t mind. Of course, by the time this goes to press I’ll probably be fired and unemployed again—it’s inevitable, I swear—but at least then I’ll get to talk shit about my current job in a future issue.

To Be Continued...



This is picture #2. Maybe Bonaduce was right, if someone had to be fired unceremoniously for nothing, why not a friend instead of this genius?

MY FRIEND ANDREA HOPE E-MAILED ME FROM JAPAN recently because she had found a zine in Tower Records that mentioned me by name a few times. The zine is Marc Parker's *Azmacourt* and the first mention was, "I am now 'officially' dead to Josh Saitz." When I got the e-mail, I was surprised mostly because I can't imagine that anyone reading Marc's zine would give a shit that he was dead to me. I know it's not nice to speak ill of the dead, but my feeling is, I never said I was nice, and if I didn't like someone when they were alive, dying is not going to change how I feel.

THIRD PRINTING UPDATE: AMUSING YOURSELF TO DEATH (P.3) IS NO LONGER BEING PUBLISHED; I AM NOW "OFFICIALLY" DEAD TO JOSH SAITZ (P.12)

AS MANY OF MY LONG-TIME READERS KNOW, I often see the world in stark black and white. I am aware that there are gray areas, but to me, right is right, wrong is wrong, and dead is dead. Marc Parker is not the first person that did something stupid, selfish or short-sighted to end up being dead to me and I am sure he won't be the last. The thing is, my sense of morality is not fluid or shifting. My loyalty doesn't come easily and those few that have it take it very seriously, as they should. I don't fully trust anyone but my wife, and I always tell her she is the most important person to me because she's the only family that I chose. Ironically, I am writing this paragraph in a Starbucks because I am having a fight with her and I am too stubborn to apologize or go home. I don't even like coffee or Starbucks, but there are few other public places in New York City where you can sit with a laptop for as long as you like and no one will chase you out or make you keep buying shit. Don't ever let it be said that I am a liar because I am not. I tell my subjective truth, which is often validated by objective facts, but every truth is subjective. You may not see things the same way that I do, but to me, in order to be a liar, I would have to say or print something that I know is not true and I *have* never, and *will* never, do that because I have always felt that zine publishers and comedians are the only people with license to force people to confront ugly truths in a funny way and get away with it.

SINCE I WAS A KID I have had friends who, for one reason or another (peer pressure, a desire to advance in the social order, stupidity), did something to me that they knew they shouldn't have done. When I was in college I dated a girl named Adrienne who was a gorgeous bitch. She was probably a bitch first and gorgeous second, but the rules of grammar compel me to put it as I have. We had a stormy relationship with lots of passionate sex and passionate arguments. One of the main issues that I had with her was that she was a compulsive flirt. I recently learned that she was dating my friend Jonah when I met her and she left him for me, but at the time I really had no idea. It was like one day she just showed up in my suite. For the next two weeks, every single guy on the whole floor was dying to fuck her and for some crazy reason she wanted me because I completely ignored her. The more often she stayed, the more I got the feeling she wasn't going to leave. Everyone was so fucking jealous of me but I think if anyone else had gotten her, I would've been just as jealous. I learned from that experience that being an asshole is unbelievably attractive to many women, just as being a gorgeous bitch makes men jump through hoops. I also heard that after college she got really fat, which doesn't make me as happy as it once would have.

Her incessant flirting didn't bother me as long as it was light-hearted and the people she was flirting with



Imagine a young, chain-smoking Sharon Stone who is ovulating, moody and not taking her medication. Now imagine you have my hair. It could be worse. Hey, I got her with that hair, so who's laughing now?

knew that I was her boyfriend. After a lot of discussion, we agreed to a simple rule: She couldn't behave like a flirt unless I was there. That way, I could have some control of the situation—when it looked like it was getting too intense, I'd walk over and kiss her. I did it as a way for me to get over my jealousy because when you're dating a gorgeous bitch, everyone wants a turn on your ride.

The thing that caused her premature death was that she fucked a skeezy wigger named Ben while on Christmas break. I don't know if she planned on being his girlfriend but he was

P.N.G.'d (made a Persona Non Grata, as it was officially called, or in other words, he was told to leave for good) from college a few months later for spraypainting his graffiti tag "Hoist" on school property. I found out about her betrayal not only from him, but also from all of his friends, and when I confronted her, she lamely tried to turn it around and tell me that I was still being jealous. I am not at all jealous of a retarded, inarticulate wigger who fucked my sloppy seconds just *once*.

Dead to Me

If anything, he should be jealous of me because I was never kicked out of school, I got to fuck the hell out of her for months and I got to make all my friends jealous because they all wanted her, too. When I found out that she had cheated on me and then had lied to cover it up, she was dead to me. It was a death in a very real sense because I went through all of the stages of coping with death. I got upset, I railed at the world, I pitied myself, I went through denial and anger, and finally, when I was done, I just accepted it. Adrienne died while I was in college. After that, whenever people would ask me about her, I would say that she was dead to me. There's nothing to say about someone once they're dead. She no longer existed in my head, and if I saw her at a party or in the dining hall, it was like seeing the ghost of someone I used to know.

EVEN THOUGH THIS WHOLE CONCEPT may seem weird or alien to you, I have gotten much better at

coping with death and loss since adopting this mindset. In the many years since Adrienne's untimely demise, I've often tried to explain my thought process to others as a warning to people to not do as these people have done so they don't end up dead, too. I always give plenty of warning

to my friends before they die and I've had some friends who were on life-support for much longer than they should have been, but I was sometimes too sentimental to pull the plug and let them go. Being my friend is not like being in the mob—one shift of the wind and you

get clipped in your garage. I offer everyone my sincere friendship, access to anything I have or know and loyalty to the end of the world. I also expect the same in return—anything less and I would feel like I was getting ripped off.

SINCE I STARTED THIS ZINE I have had three very close friends disappoint me so profoundly that I had to write them off for good, but they are still very much alive to me. Adair was one of my closer friends when I was in college, but she always wanted to fuck me, and I would never let her. I did let her blow me once, but at the time I was dumb enough to think it would end her fascination rather than reinvigorate it and I learned that lesson the hard way. When Juli and I moved to New York in 1994, we both hung out with Adair on many occasions. At first Adair tried to break us up by telling me that Juli was too young for me or that she hadn't had enough trauma in her life to truly understand me, which was absolute bullshit. Then she decided that since she couldn't get me away from Juli, she would focus her energy on getting both of us into bed. Juli is like most guys when it comes to same-sex activities: She doesn't think there's anything wrong with it, but she wants no part of it. Ecstasy lowered my inhibitions on a number of occasions, but even when I was the most fucked up I'd ever been in my life (at her boyfriend's loft party in Brooklyn where I did, in order, pot, ecstasy, coke, special K, whippets and then more pot and ecstasy) I knew better than to end up in a dark room with her.

The first serious thing she did to cross the line was when she brought a wrapped box to my apartment and asked me to store it for her, despite the fact that her apartment was at least twice the size of my 350-square-foot studio. After she left, I found out that sealed inside the



In addition to seducing the camera, Adair was good at seducing anything else with sex organs. Ecstasy + my camera = this picture of Adair & her "roommate" Aimee.

box was a gun that belonged to a drug dealer that we both knew named Dirt. Actually, his name was Jason, but he wanted to be called Dirt and when I wanted ecstasy, I bought into his name. As soon as she admitted what was in the box, I told her she had two weeks to come get it or I was going to throw it away. In my zine, I try to be as apolitical as possible but I hate guns and SUVs because they are two common ways people that are insecure about their manhood can compensate for their shortcomings, both literally and figuratively. She knew how I felt about guns and gave me a gun anyway. She was close to being dead to me until she came and picked up the gun. For some reason, she thought it would make me feel better if I knew that Dirt was in jail, but that only made it worse because I couldn't help feeling that I was either part of a crime, or part of covering up a crime, so the gun had to go.

After a while her relentless sexual come-ons became tiring. There's only so many ways you can say no to a person before you get sick of saying it, and Adair couldn't take the hint. After I moved to the City with Juli, Adair and I drifted apart. She didn't want to come to the City and we didn't want to take a train to her apartment in the suburbs and end up trapped there, so the friendship just fizzled.

If she called me today and said hello I would probably talk to her, though I doubt we have much in common anymore. She didn't do anything to me or Juli that would have made her dead because to me the line was always that Adair could not make a sexual overture to Juli, or to me in front of Juli, and while rubbing our legs or trying to spoon us both at once might be considered a pass, I subconsciously decided that physical contact with either of our genitals would end Adair's life and anything short of that would be tolerated.



Adair always liked posing for pictures. Here she is on campus at SUNY Purchase.

MY BEST FRIEND TURNED INTO A JUNKIE (see “My Best Friend is a Junkie!” in *NegCap* #1) while I was working on my first issue and it made me very sad. Since I wrote that story, many people have chastised me or told me that I was a shitty friend for abandoning the Junkie when he needed me most, but those people don’t know the whole story. The truth is that the Junkie and I were avid drug consumers the whole time we were friends. He introduced me to ecstasy and special K, and he bought drugs for me more times than I can count—and I often returned the favor. We always told ourselves that we weren’t drug addicts or even dependent on drugs for fun because we never *needed* the drugs, we just *liked* them. There were long stretches of time where we didn’t do drugs at all. I remember we went to Australia together for a few months and brought six hits of really good E with us. On the 14-hour flight he got

nervous that we were going to get caught, so we took them all. When the TV screens on the plane said we’d crossed the equator we both immediately ran to the bathroom to see if the water really would go down the sink the other way. We annoyed the other passengers and had a ball tweaking out on a plane full of sleeping people. My point is, we both did a lot of drugs together, but the one thing we both had was complete and utter contempt for junkies.

First of all, heroin addicts, or piece-of-shit junkies, as I call them, make recreational drug users like me look bad. They make a lot of otherwise-rational people sincerely think that after you smoke one joint, it’s only a hop, skip and a jump to raping grandmothers for their social security checks so you can get high again. We both had jobs and while we did get a lot of our drugs for free, we usually paid for drugs with our own hard-earned money. I am sure many of you are asking, “Who would give you free drugs?” Quite often it was the now-infamous Michael Alig, the party monster, who was always very generous to us because he was close friends with the Junkie. While I’m on the subject, the

Junkie was one of the original Club Kids here in NYC but he didn’t have a stupid made-up name or dress like a fucking retard. He was in it for the free admission to clubs, free drink tickets and free drugs, and I enjoyed the ride with him as long as it lasted. If one guy hadn’t been murdered, it would all be fondly remembered as a time of glorious excess that would be impossible to recreate. As Bill Hicks, my hero, often said, “I had great times on drugs. Never hurt anyone, never robbed anyone, never lost a job, a car or a girlfriend. Sorry.”

The Junkie was from the same philosophical school I’m from. It’s pretty simple: No matter how fucked up your life, no matter how hard you’ve had it, you are responsible for your own actions, nothing more and nothing less. To us, drugs are supposed to be done recreationally if they’re done at all and by recreational I mean, “In the interests of fun, frivolity and enjoying life to the fullest.” Sitting in a dark bar by

yourself slowly poisoning your liver while you grouse about politicians or sports is in no way recreational.

Taking mushrooms and going out in a canoe is. Nobody gets hurt, nobody wants to hurt anybody. It’s just another way for us to explore our world and our

selves and expand our consciousness. Even if that sounds like I’m some stupid fucking hippie, that’s what I sincerely believe.

I CLEARLY REMEMBER ONCE when the Junkie got us both on the guest list for a test screening of some new British indie film down in the East Village. On the way down he told me it was called *Trainspotting* and I asked him what the name meant because I’d never heard the term before. He said it was about loser junkies and “trainspotting” was British slang for when someone had track marks in their arm from shooting heroin. I believed him for a long time but it actually is just a really dull hobby that eccentric Brits have where they simply look out for trains. It’s just like it sounds. After the movie they handed out clipboards with a whole bunch of questions about what people thought about the movie. The consensus in the room was that no one could understand a foookin’ tin’ dat Begbie wuz sayin’. The consensus between me and the Junkie was that all junkies were stupid, selfish, self-destructive assholes who deserved to die. In the movie, the junkies rob tourists, deal drugs, let a baby die, humiliate their families and overdose regularly, all so they can sit in a dirty house and get so fucking high they can’t even talk. That’s not recreation—that’s fucking bullshit.

When my best friend met a homeless junkie hustler and decided to stop being my friend to help this other selfish, stupid loser by becoming a junkie himself, I was understandably upset. I tried to reason with him. I confronted him regularly about his problem and had some of his other friends intervene as well. After a while, instead of taking my heartfelt pleas seriously, he started lying and covering up his habit. He became unreliable in every sense of the word and when a guy that doesn’t have much money starts doing heroin, the first people to get victimized are the immediate family and trusting friends. There was no way in hell I would let my best friend fuck up his life, steal, lie, and then lose a job and the financial support of his father. But it wasn’t up to me, it was up to him and he *chose* to focus on his poor junkie hustler and he became a junkie himself, losing everything, including my friendship.

I ended the relationship in a series of ever-more-vicious e-mails because he actually had the nerve to come over to my apartment, shoot up in my bathroom and then act like nothing was wrong. At the time, I thought that there was nothing even potentially redeeming about the situation so I left him alone. In a way, I sort of hoped that my abandoning him in such a primal way might be the one thing that made him stop what he was doing and get help. Even after all he

Thanks again for all the E, Michael. On behalf of any New Yorker who enjoyed one of your many great parties at Disco 2000, I would like to thank you. You shouldn’t’ve killed that guy, but you were always nice to me.



The only Photoshop I did on this was to remove a building so I could put this caption here. Here's Chris "Shecky" Hoffman and Jay on the roof of our building at 6AM after a full night of drinking and acid. Jay smelled smoke so we all went to the roof and saw the building across the street on fire. We got a boombox, a camera and more acid. Playing in the background is Duran Duran's classic song, "Hold Back the Rain."



did to me and all the misery, heartache and tsuris [Yiddish for troubles and painful stress] he caused me, he still wasn't dead to me. That's where I've been going for the last few paragraphs—he really fucked up in a big way but I can and do forgive him and hope more than anything that he stopped doing heroin even though I couldn't stop him. I couldn't watch him destroy himself in such a pathetic, clichéd way. I loved him like a brother and I know in my heart that if the situation were reversed, he would not watch me destroy myself either. He was my best friend for a long time and he taught me a lot about me and a lot about life. There are times when I actually miss him and wonder what he's doing.

A FEW MONTHS AGO my wife and I were watching *Real Sex* on HBO. My favorite part of the show is the street interviews where they ask drunk New Yorkers very dirty questions and get very dirty answers. I love it when fat black women talk about eating ass or some old couple says they like to pee on each other. It's hilarious! We were watching this episode and we saw these two fruity looking dudes on the street and one of them was talking about sex. The other guy started laughing and I immediately recognized the Junkie! Juli and I both agreed that he looked great, so I have to assume he's off heroin now. He didn't talk at all, his friend did all the talking, but I knew it was him just from the way he laughed. To be perfectly honest, the reason I never use his real name is that I don't want to

hurt him and if he came back into my life somehow, I would not want him to be embarrassed by my words, even though he absolutely deserves every goddamn thing I've said. I'm no monster—despite what you may have heard about my penis.

I recently had a dream where I was in my first apartment in Manhattan and the Junkie came over to hang out. He looked great and wanted to talk to me. He thanked me for having the courage to leave him because after I left, he hit rock bottom and decided to turn his life around. He said he'd been reading my zine and thought I was being a real dick about it [I am, but I am also right], but he understood. He said that I saved his life, in my dream, and it was so crystal clear when I woke up that I actually felt like I had been forgiven. When I told Juli about the dream, she said, "Do you think he died last night?" and I said, "I wouldn't be surprised," and that gave us both the pee chills.

WHEN I WAS A FRESHMAN IN COLLEGE I met a few guys from Brooklyn who had been friends since they were kids. Chris, Morris, Jay and Dickstein were like the Jewish frat brothers I never had. All of them have fascinating stories that I'll share as briefly as I can. Chris's mother left his family very early in his life and his father always disliked him. His father re-married and his step-mother adored him. He was kicked out of a few colleges, including Purchase, and was my roommate in my first Manhattan apartment, until his cunt girlfriend convinced him to dump his friends and

become a stupid, shallow yuppie. Well, he was always a shallow yuppie, but she made it worse and made him move to a sterile high-rise in Battery Park City. She was a rich bitch who married and then divorced Chris and actually took his money. I can't even begin to describe what a fucking cunt this girl was, and I don't use the word lightly or often. These days, Chris publishes many different *Shecky's* guides to bars and he's doing very well. There is no real Shecky, Chris has just always been associated with the name Shecky. I actually wrote more than a dozen reviews for the San Francisco edition of *Shecky's Bar Guide* when I was broke as fuck but I don't know if he ever published that edition.

Morris is the most Jewish guy I've ever purchased three pounds of marijuana from. His father was murdered in a robbery in the Bronx, and it breaks my heart every time I think about it because Mo is such a fantastic guy and I can only assume he was like his father. We used to play poker on a regular basis and every time we'd ask him to play he would say, almost like a reflex, "What's tomorrow, Wednesday? I'll have to check out the situation."

Jay's parents adopted him because they thought they couldn't have children. A few years later, they got pregnant and Jay has a younger brother he calls "Headward." The last time I saw Headward he was a zitty little troll who collected gore magazines. Jay, on the other hand, is six feet tall, slim, Nordic and, according to Adair, the proud owner of the fattest dick she'd ever seen.

John Dickstein is the single most deranged person I've ever met and the person I'm often alluding to in very disturbing references. He said he'd write a story for this zine called, "The Only Good Job is a Blowjob," but he never did. He did send me a lot of letters telling me about his work and life experiences and I have decided to publish them on page 58. No one else in the group will have anything to do with Dickstein anymore, but I find him fascinating because he really should've been killed or arrested by now.

Jay and Mo didn't go to my college, they were just friends with Chris and Dickstein, who did go to my school, briefly. We became fast friends because we brought out the most destructive and anti-social impulses in each other. As tag-team terrors we grew bolder and more elaborate in our hijinks. We hung out so often that Jay decided he wanted to come to art school and be my roommate for my sophomore year. The only problem was that when Jay was fifteen someone

Seeing Red If headaches plague you, consider blowing your top. Holding in anger can trigger head pain—even more than stress can — reveals a study from St. Louis University.



My ex-friend Jay and my oldest friend Lurky hanging out in a shitty motel in Wyoming while my car was fixed. Lurky is wearing a sleep mask because you have to catch Z's while you can get 'em.

told him that he didn't legally have to be in school anymore and he got up and left. For good. Even though SUNY Purchase (or Camp Poor Choice, as we called it) is a small state art school, they do require high school diplomas for admission. Jay was supposed to take the GED in early spring so he signed up and said that he was studying. He had been accepted to Purchase pending his completion of the GED.

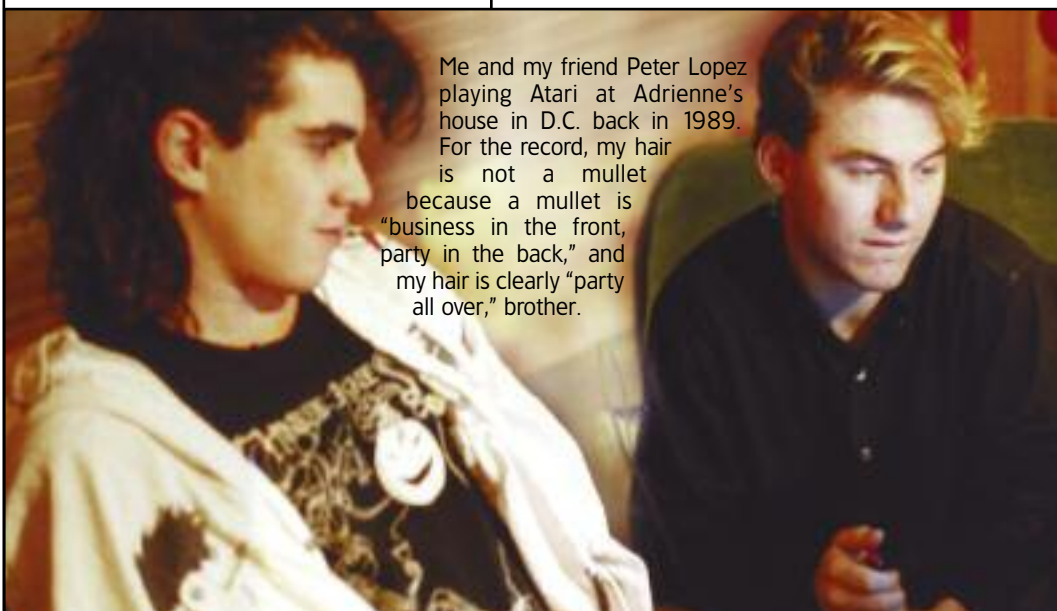
A few days before the exam he was at the Malibu nightclub (which I wrote about in a true story about the Junkie and everyone else here called "Doppelgänger," which is only on my web site, if you're interested) with mutual friends, Oliver, his girlfriend Sandra and some other Purchase people. In the crowd that night were casting agents from DA Pennebaker's production company. They were there looking for ten hipster kids to go on tour with Depeche Mode for a documentary called *101*. They picked Jay, Oliver and Sandra to go and a few days later Jay packed up all his stuff and hit the road. If you want to rent the movie, Jay is the guy who is showing the other people how to alter their driver's licenses during the first screening process, the guy who rolls a joint on camera and says he's not rolling a joint on camera, and the guy who makes fun of some heshers by saying that they like, "Bums N' Poseurs" instead of Guns N' Roses. Oliver has very pointy hair that he maintains with some glue and a special pillow and Sandra is the hottest girl who ever

lived, so you can't miss her. While the other high school dropouts were in Brooklyn taking the GED exam so they could go to college, Jay was smoking pot and doing coke with Dave Gahan, lead singer of Depeche Mode.

Naturally, I was disappointed that he wasn't going to be my roommate, but I got over it

of my apartment of Fred Flintstone and Barney Rubble doing whippets. We had so many inside jokes that people must have thought we were the most unfunny assholes ever, but we were hilarious. I could do a whole issue of this zine full of Jay stories and maybe someday I will because someone besides me and Jay ought to know what was done in the name of fun.

When Juli and I moved in together in NYC in 1995, we were starting to mature little by little. We shared a small studio apartment and paid our own way, but Jay was still living with his parents (and probably still is even though he's gotta be thirty-five by now). Sometimes on the weekends we'd go to a park or on a quest for ice cream. But Jay was always in the bars picking up girls and spending all his money on drugs. He was never going to grow up because being a juvenile really was his true self and he was very comfortable



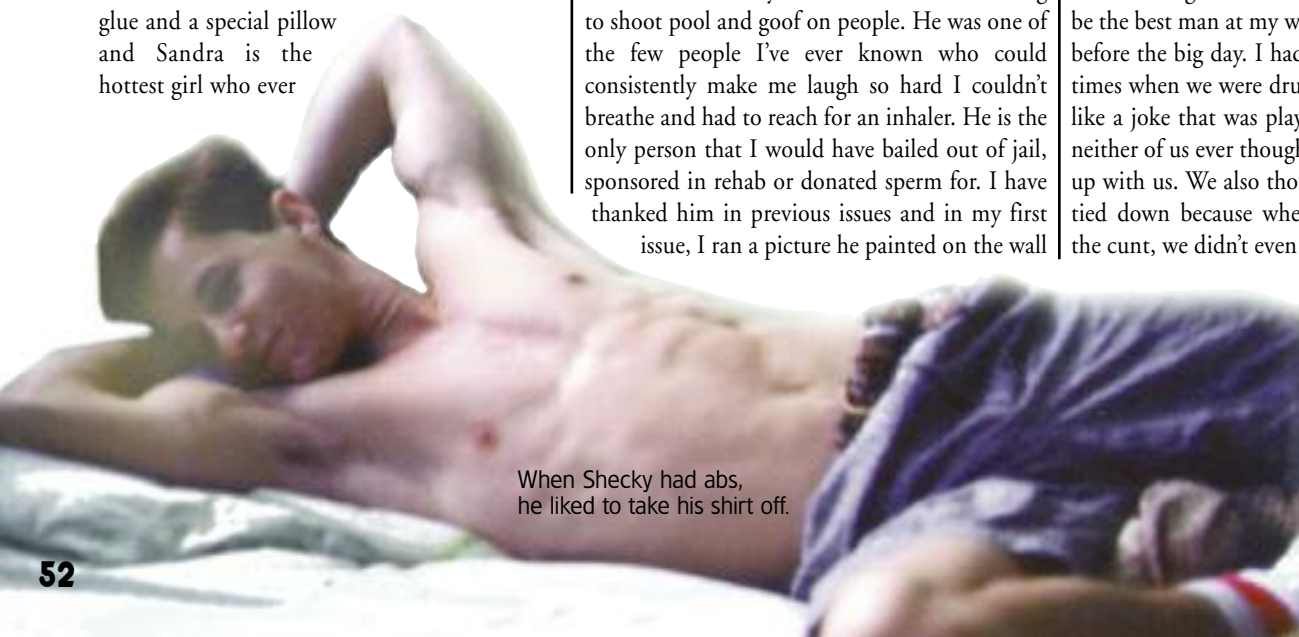
Me and my friend Peter Lopez playing Atari at Adrienne's house in D.C. back in 1989. For the record, my hair is not a mullet because a mullet is "business in the front, party in the back," and my hair is clearly "party all over," brother.

because I would've gone with Depeche Mode, too. Over the years we remained very close friends. He was the one guy who could get me to come to some shitty bar at three in the morning to shoot pool and goof on people. He was one of the few people I've ever known who could consistently make me laugh so hard I couldn't breathe and had to reach for an inhaler. He is the only person that I would have bailed out of jail, sponsored in rehab or donated sperm for. I have thanked him in previous issues and in my first issue, I ran a picture he painted on the wall

with it. I could never fault him for it because if Jay was anything, he was always consistent. The rest of us did change, no doubt about it.

The thing that tore it was that I asked him to be the best man at my wedding about six months before the big day. I had asked him a number of times when we were drunk and marriage seemed like a joke that was played on other people, but neither of us ever thought any woman would put up with us. We also thought we would never get tied down because when Chris was married to the cunt, we didn't even refer to her by name, we

just made the sound of a whip cracking, and that was never going to happen to free spirits like us. About three months before the wedding we were out in some bar and he was



When Shecky had abs, he liked to take his shirt off.

The write way to heal We know that writing in a journal about irksome events can ease stress, but early research from King's College London has shown that **venting on paper about upsetting experiences can help wounds heal faster** than writing about trivial things. No need to pen lengthy sob stories; a mere 20 minutes of journal time daily for three days may be enough to speed recovery.

hitting on a girl as usual. He paged some guy to the pay phone and then we sat there in the booth waiting for a coke dealer to join us. When the dealer arrived, the whole transaction completely skeeved me out. It was like walking in on your mom sucking her brother's dick: you're like, What the fuck? Jay bought a few hundred dollars worth of coke and it really freaked me out. It also literally broke my heart because he spent as much on coke as it would have cost him to be part of my wedding. When the dealer left, Jay explained that girls would be more interested in banging him if he had coke to share. Yeah, they're called "coke whores," and they're about as stylish as draping your neck in a dead, disemboweled and dried-out animal. It's not recreational drug use if you're the only one doing drugs. If you can't enjoy hanging out and talking with your friends without doing hard drugs the whole time, you may have a problem.

A MONTH AND A HALF BEFORE we were supposed to get married, I called him to confirm that he had tickets for Vegas. My wife had found some sick deal for the hotel and airfare from NY and we were bringing six people with us. *Mi amigo* Pedro was the first to book and he asked if he could bring his new girlfriend and I said that would be fine with me. Jay said that he really wanted to go but he couldn't afford it. I said I would loan him the money, but he wouldn't take it. I offered to buy him the plane ticket and said he could sleep on someone else's floor. He still said he couldn't do it. I was really hurt—no, I was devastated. All girls might dream of their wedding day, but I rarely gave it a second thought. On those few occasions when I had, I always pictured me and Jay together. I realized that at some point, when I hadn't even noticed, Jay had stopped being my best friend and Pedro had always been there. I immediately asked

Pedro to be my best man and he said that he was honored to be asked. It really touched me that he was so into the whole idea of my wedding and it meant the world to me that he was going to come. All of us were very close friends and hung out together, but Pedro still hasn't forgiven Jay. I have forgiven Jay and I am not mad at him at all. Peter doesn't talk to Jay anymore because he thinks it was really shitty of Jay to leave me high and dry like that.

The strange thing is that right after that incident I realized that my whole friendship with Jay had turned into long, dull nights of drinking, smoking and standing in bars watching Jay hitting on girls. I had a girl, so I didn't need to keep looking, but Jay was always looking. I never wanted to end up being the creepy old guy in the club trolling for younger chicks. It's as pathetic as a comb-over and I knew it was not my destiny. I am sure that he's exactly the same today as he was when it ended: driving a souped up old American muscle car with a modified Borg interior and living at home, spending weekends in bars and in pussies. I always thought he'd end up being a rock star. When my Brooklyn pals were in high school they were all in a band together. Jay, being the Depeche Mode nerd, played keyboards, Chris played guitar and Dickstein played bass until he was replaced by Mo (they called him Tick because unlike Flea, he couldn't jump around, he just stood in one place and sucked). Jay never took it seriously enough to make it a career because to him it wasn't fun if you took it seriously.

After I got back from my wedding, it became an uncomfortable topic between us, even though I didn't bring it up. He always brought it up and would give me half-hearted apologies that only made me feel worse. When we would make plans to hang out he would cancel at the last minute, claiming car trouble or poverty. I'd invite him over to play Jet Moto and smoke pot and we'd have a great time, but he didn't talk much. After a few months, every conversation began with him apologizing for not calling, for not hanging out and for not returning my many phone calls. I would sometimes tell him that he didn't need to apologize, he just should return my calls and hang out some time. He would tell me he would, promise to call to make plans in a few days and then not call again for a few months. It's sad how it just fizzled out like that but I have no animosity. Jay is still very much alive to me, I just don't know what he's up to, but I have a very strong hunch. Just for the

LET HE WHO IS *WITHOUT SIN* CAST THE FIRST STONE

*a new fragrance
for Him*

Christ Killer

CK

The Sweet Smell of Money

psycho fans, here's a bonus fact: One night after partying too much in the City, both Adair and Jay ended up sleeping at my place. While everyone else slept, they fucked in my bathtub. I'm beginning to realize that Adair wasn't necessarily hot for me or Juli, she was just a fucking whore. The best part of this whole goddamn story is that no one can sue me because it's all so fucking true. And I am not using real names. Bwa ha ha!

In 2004 I learned that no one in my circle of friends has had contact with Jay in more than three years and they all have a story similar to mine. Every time they saw him, he was coked up and fucked up and he never returned anyone's phone calls.

AS YOU READ IN "KAROSHI" on page 32, Bonaduce is also dead to me. He was one of the most egregious examples of a cocksucker living down to everyone's worst expectations. There is nothing he could ever say or do to bring himself back to life in my eyes. But if his ex-wife, who I usually got along with, wanted to write a piece about what a truly reprehensible piece of shit he is, I'd be glad to publish it and I would even pay her for it. Payback's a bitch and so am I.

MANY TANGENTS LATER, we return from whence we came, to Marc Parker. Like many other people I know in the world of zines, we "met" when we traded zines. I had read in a review zine that his zine was about asthma, which I've had since I had my first cigarettes in utero (thanks, Mom!). I couldn't imagine a zine about asthma, but it really was just that, with some other silly stuff thrown in for fun. I thought it was informative but I already knew everything about asthma. I've been on medication, shots, inhalers and nebulizers my whole life but for the non-asthmatic, I am sure it could be a useful resource. Marc really seemed to like my zine and he wrote a gushing review of my first issue. He wrote to me later saying, "I can still taste your ass on my lips from that *AYTD* [*Amusing Yourself to Death*] review... heh," which I actually thought was a creepy and gay expression.

He confided in me that he got all of his asthma medication from a free clinic at an Indian Reservation because he was $\frac{1}{16}$ Indian. How the fuck do you prove that? And why is it that the working poor don't get free health insurance but an unemployed, freeloading loser, who is no Marc Littlefeather, gets expensive inhalers for free (on our tax dollars, by the way) because someone up his family tree fucked an Indian? Jeez Louise! I actually felt bad for him. At the time I was in the same exact boat that he was: unemployed and without health insurance. But instead of glomming off a dead ancestor's legacy, I volunteered to be a part of an asthma

research program at Bellevue Hospital, which is notorious for its mental patients. If you get HBO, they made a great documentary about Bellevue a few years ago and I can personally vouch for its authenticity. I needed the medication to survive, but it was one of the most frightening things I've ever done on purpose. After a few visits I made Juli come with me to stand on line to get the discounted medication for volunteers. I could afford the co-pay on my unemployment checks though I did have to cut my doses slightly. Juli was terrified to the point where we couldn't joke about it, though we did try to break the tension by making faces when no one was looking.



Marc mistakenly assumed the meds that I sent were provided by my health insurance but I didn't get health insurance until I was married.

Over the course of the first few years of my zine, I had a cordial e-mail relationship with Marc. He was always a little too sycophantic and it made me a little jumpy. As part of my medical research at Bellevue they gave me free samples of all kinds of asthma medications. They would regularly have me rotate them and move on to the next round. I always had extras of very expensive medications that I wasn't supposed to take, so I sent them to Marc, who needed them but couldn't afford them. I also sent him mix tapes and other zines that I'd found and he was also one of the first people to buy my *Misfit Toys* CD when I put it out. I really thought we were friends.

I drifted away from the zine scene for a while so I could live enough to have something to write about and when I started work on *NegCap* #3, he was one of the people who told me that they couldn't wait to see what I would do next. As part of my reintroduction to the world of zines, I started taking part in the alt.zines newsgroup. There were a lot of assholes who were part of the group and even more people who saw fit to snipe, bitch and criticize, but who had never even done a zine. My feeling is that unless you can do better you should keep your mouth shut. I don't think that everything I've ever done is the best thing in the world, but I certainly think that this zine is way above average, and it has nothing to do with the quality of the paper or the design. It has to do with the fact that the person doing it is articulate, sincere, honest and

pulls no punches. I put my fucking heart into this thing that you are holding. Most zines are half-hearted attempts to be funny by lonely losers, boring music zines that have to surround their ads with meaningless reviews or they are so personal and painful that they're aimed at a very small target market. I would like to think that this zine is better than most of what's out there simply because I aim to offend, inform and entertain anyone who has enough sense to interpret the words rather than just overreact to them. It's a pipe dream, I'm sure, but it's a necessary delusion that allows me to write this zine in a natural, comfortable way. I don't feel like I have to be politically correct, socially aware, mature, responsible or even fair. All I have to do is tell the fucking truth and try to make you laugh, think or get upset and I consider it a job well done.

WHEN I REJOINED THE NEWSGROUP, Marc had already made many enemies by using fake names, fake e-mail addresses and posting shit that was designed only to incite verbal riots rather than spark reasonable discussions. I have always thought of myself as a person who likes to stir shit up just to see what shakes loose, but he was actually crossing the line to me. I publicly and privately supported his right to do whatever he wanted, but I questioned his motives. If Marc thought everyone in the group was a douche, it made no sense that he would want to argue with them over mundane stuff.

At the time, Mindspring was my ISP and I had a crappy dial-up connection. I signed on one night and my mail program told me I had hundreds of e-mails. My mail program would begin to download them and about halfway through, the connection would crap out and I would be disconnected. I dialed back in and tried again, over and over, for about two hours. Each time I got disconnected, the program never got the signal that the first few hundred had been successfully downloaded, so each new call was a fresh attempt to get all of them. It was either get them all at once or not get them at all. I thought that there were some personal e-mails in there with the bombs and I didn't want to admit defeat and lose any potential e-mail from friends. By 11:30 that night I was furious at the asshole that did it to me and I couldn't figure out why anyone would have attacked me, unprovoked, because at the time I really wanted to be liked and respected by everyone involved in zines. I gave that up shortly thereafter, but at the time I really wanted people to think of me as a serious zine publisher who was doing something new and important, not some frustrated high-school student who wanted to review free punk CDs.

Whenever stuff like that happened to me, my poor wife would end up having to live with a fucking maniac for a few hours until I could cool off. I ended up calling customer service at Mindspring and I had them manually delete the hundreds of messages that were clogging up my inbox. The next day the whole newsgroup was abuzz with the offended cries of all the bomb's victims. It wasn't just me that was targeted, it was everyone who had recently posted to alt.zines. Feel free to search Google's newsgroups to see all the fuss if you're interested in the full history. The whole thing really upset me and made me not want to be a part of the group at all. If it was just a bunch of immature idiots trying to find ways to piss each other off, I had no use for it. I have to shovel enough shit in real life without having to find new annoyances online.

A few people on the newsgroup did a little bit of research and discovered that the bomb's sender, zinemao@aol.com, was none other than my "friend" Marc Parker. I was genuinely shocked but all the circumstantial evidence was incontrovertible. I e-mailed him and told him that it was one of the stupidest, most fucked-up things a person could do and it accomplished absolutely nothing except to piss people off for no discernable reason. I also demanded that he own up to it on the newsgroup and apologize or I would never speak to him again. He sent me a limp apology, admitted that it was him and said that for his own reasons, he couldn't admit anything. His letter appears here exactly as he sent it to me. Like an elephant, I have a very long memory—and a very long trunk—and I never forget an asshole.

Subject: Aplogies [sic] from the Committee

Date: Fri, 28 Aug 1998 03:16:38

From: Azmacourt@aol.com

To: negative_capability@mindspring.com

Josh,

I'm sorry. I mean it. The CC [carbon copy] list for the Zine Mao mailbomb was compiled from a few threads on the NG [newsgroup], and although you responded to one of them (as jsaitz@mindspring [sic], I believe, which I didn't realize was you until much later, but that's another matter entirely), it was only briefly. You and some others by no means deserved [sic] the full blown attack. And while I thought it's been

common knowledge for some time that I was Zine Mao, there was a need to be somewhat covert in the beginning. I know that you probably don't think anyone, including Kris Kane or Shaun Richman, deserved the attack, but this is where we must disagree. However, I really regret that neither of them seemed to have as many problems deleting the messages as you did [instead of wishing you had as easy a time as they did]. I can also understand if you don't support my refusal to publicly take credit for and/or justify Mao's attacks. But one personal rule of mine is to never admit my pseudonyms. Sure, I'll make it completely obvious that it is me and leak ALL of that incriminating information to "Brenda Norton." But I like the idea of everyone figuring it out for themselves. Anyway, again, I'm sorry. I'll never mailbomb you again. And if I start up any serious alt.zines shit again, I'll respectfully keep you out of it, even if you never forgive me for this. You've been a good friend to me, and I don't want you to regret this. Should I mention that I haven't found a source of weed here in SF yet? Maybe not, but I look forward to your response. I also look forward to you moving out here, and it's not the Vancerils [a very expensive brand of inhaler that I had sent him for free] or asthma story [I told him I'd write a piece about my asthma for his zine because he kept telling me that he loved my writing] that make me say this. [For the record, the fact that he brought this up means that this is exactly why he is apologizing.]

Later,

Marc

(PS this is not for public consumption, but I'll answer any and all questions that you might have)

I didn't post his message to the newsgroup and I didn't even tell people that I knew Marc was Zine Mao because he said at the end of his letter, "This is not for public consumption." At the time I was also good friends with Kris Kane from the zines *Retard* and *Universal Citizen*. Marc and Kris didn't get along and were constantly sniping at each other on the group. Being a Jew, I have a tendency to be a yenta, which is a person who talks too much and always wants to mediate. I privately asked Kris what Marc had done that pissed him off so much that he would spend any time or energy bashing him. Kris said that earlier, when Marc was a reviewer for *Amusing Yourself to Death*, Marc had given a negative review to *Universal Citizen* by dismissively calling it a "lit. zine." I agreed with Kris that *UC* is not a lit. zine and when I saw the review and read the issue in question, I thought that Marc hadn't even read the zine. Marc had given it a

cursory glance and had dismissed it out of hand—it was obvious. I e-mailed Marc and told him that Kris disliked him because of this particular review, that the review was shallow and inaccurate and that Marc was dead wrong in this situation. I told him that if he wanted to be a mature person he should apologize to Kris and admit that he'd done a half-assed review. I also told him that everything in my e-mail to him was between us and not to be repeated to anyone, especially Kris. I was not trying to fight Kris's battles or even give Marc his much-deserved beatdown. I was actually just trying to see if it was possible to end some of the hostility on the newsgroup by ending one of the longer-running and more vicious fights. A few days later Marc posted a message on the newsgroup about what a pussy Kris was and announced that Kris had gotten his panties in a bunch because Marc called *Universal Citizen* a "lit. zine."

Marc Parker is a skinny little asthmatic pussyfart while Kris Kane is built like a linebacker. Marc talks tough but Kris could literally break Marc Parker into very small pieces without much effort. I e-mailed Kris immediately and told him the whole story and I told Marc that he had crossed the line. I warned him that what I had told him was in confidence and that if he ever did anything else like that again, even if it was to someone else, he would be dead to me. After the first incident and apology, I was again shocked by how easily Marc would say one thing, do another, and then be surprised that I was upset with him.

I didn't take part in the newsgroup for a while after that because it was causing me too much tsuris and I wasn't getting anything useful out of it. In the interim, Marc gave my zine one of the nicest and most glowing reviews my zine has ever gotten. I like to think it was an earned review, but with Marc it could have been guilt or his way of trying to worm his way back into my good graces, or, if you want to be as cynical as I truly am, it was because I said I was moving out to San Francisco, where he was living, and he needed a hook-up for free inhalers and pot. Months later I got a new issue of Marc's zine. In it, he told his readers that I was the sweetest asthmatic he'd ever met and went into great detail describing my generosity [see article on the next page]. I really couldn't imagine what was motivating him to reach out to me with one hand and slap me across the face with the other. I don't think I've ever come across as a pushover; if anything I go out of my way to blatantly shove my intolerance and hostility in the face of anyone close enough to feel my blast. The truth is that just like everyone else, I am a very complicated person—I am both sweet and vicious, kind and cruel, funny and humorless, sometimes shifting gears on the fly.

New drugs that I'll never see—because my health care is paid for by you, the reader. Serevent is a good example. Why can't more of you wheezers be like Josh?

Vanceril Regular & Double Strength: A Medication Review

Without a doubt Josh Saitz (see pg. 19) is the sweetest asthmatic that I know. Many months ago he sent me a trial-sized Beclovent (my steroid inhaler of choice), a Tilade (which I never used), and two brand new Serevents (long-term bronchodilators) which cost about \$65 each. Of course, these were provided to him by his health insurance company, but they couldn't have come at a better time. The Indian Clinic has never carried Serevent, and I ran out of my sister's leftovers over a year ago. Seeing as how no one else has even sent me a partially-used inhaler, I decided right then that Josh had earned a lifetime subscription. Then last month, the bastard sent me another package stuffed with asthma goodies, so now I have no choice but to fly to NYC and let him have his way with me. It seems only fair.

Marc Parker is not much of a graphic designer and his writing is pretty bad, too.

answered him honestly, he sent my responses to many of the people we discussed, redacting his own comments to make me look like an asshole, and I think it actually worked pretty well. With his reputation, I am surprised that anyone takes him seriously or would ever believe a single thing that he says, but it's a lesson that took me a while to learn, too. He is just an insecure liar who has done nothing but hurt people for no justifiable reason. When I told people on the newsgroup that Marc was just having fun and his only motive was to keep it interesting, they would tell me that he was a worthless piece of shit that didn't deserve respect, much less any attention. I am sure he has a whole new batch of people fooled in the world of zines, but I submit that a piece of shit cannot change what it is, no matter how hard it tries, and Marc Parker is an unredeemable piece of shit.

At that point I gave up all hope of ever being labeled the "popular" zine and joined the rest of the sullen misanthropic zines in the back row where we could smoke pot and make fun of the fucking preppies. I wrote a letter to Marc that was very menacing and deadly serious, thinking it

My wife gets to be in love with my sweet side and my readers suck up my bile and vitriol like starved feral cats at a bowl of fresh cream.

Eventually Marc wore me down because I wanted to believe that he had somehow reformed. When he was spewing his noxiousness on the newsgroup, he was a sad,

broke loser who was living at home in Oklahoma and working customer service for AOL. My life is a paradise of black-eyed virgins compared to that shit and I'm still pissed off most of the time. In the interim he had moved to San Francisco, got a job and a girlfriend and he actually seemed like he was trying to move his life in a different direction. I was also friendly with his then-girlfriend, Kelli Williams from the zine *That Girl*, and I felt like she was also trying to help redeem Marc. Since I was planning to move to San Francisco and had no friends out there, I thought he would be at least one person I could socialize with, talk zines with and maybe even become friends with. Okay, I am ready to admit it, I was a fucking idiot. Sometimes I think I'm miserable because I'm cynical and other times I think I'm cynical because I'm miserable.

It didn't take long for our asthmatic recidivist to do something stupid to piss me off again. He approached me using the alias Ben Joseph and kept asking me for my opinions about other zine publishers. When I

might wake him up. My father, Lewis, never hit me in my entire life. On the rare occasions when I was fucking up or being a smartass in front of him, he would grab me by the back of my arm and get his fingers between my bicep and the bone and hold me very tightly. He would pull me into him, stare at me grimly and lower his voice, like a bear. "Don't do that, *Joshua*," he would say to me. Jesus, that worked so well on me. My father has been gone for almost twenty years and just typing that made me want to take back all the mean shit I've already said in this issue. That's how powerful my dad's words were to me, and I know that it will absolutely work on any kid that I have. Nowadays, only my wife is authorized to call me Joshua, and only when I'm really misbehaving. Whenever people that don't know me call me Joshua I always feel like I'm in trouble. I was hoping to get Marc to pay attention by making him actually feel the menace of what's being said. That is literally what I was trying to do to Marc Parker. *The next day* he posted my personal letter to him to the newsgroup and goofed on it. You can read it for yourself right here. Normally I would fix all the lowercase stuff but I don't ever want anyone to accuse me of tampering with evidence. I didn't save any of this shit, I just searched for "Jøsh" in the newsgroups section of Google and I found out how easy it is to hang people (well, maybe just stupid people) with their own words.

From: Marc Parker (azmacourt@aol.com)

Subject: "careful," he says

Newsgroups: alt.zines

Date: 1999/08/01

marc-

i know you think you're being funny, but you're not. i know that you think that you're charming, but you're not. you're coming across to me like the ultimate spoiled little asshole and i'm not even slightly amused. you have some shit to say, say it to me. you want to quote my private correspondence on the newsgroup to agitate people, you are allowed, but i don't like it. you want to fuck with my friends as part of a joke. not cool. not even a little. if i were you, and you had some fucking foresight, i'd start thinking BEFORE posting shit. i'm not threatening you because that's stupid. i'm telling you as a friend, as a peer and as a zinester that i would like you to not use my name, not to quote me and not to fuck with people that i like just because you think it's funny, because the only person laughing now is you. for now.

josh

What I mean is: Mmmmmmmmmwah!

I guess he just didn't get the message at all. The most ironic thing to me is that at the end of his letter of admission about being Zine Mao, he specifically requested that I not mention the letter or his admission of guilt to anyone. This same cocksucker who wants me to not reveal something he says in an e-mail is the same person who sent my personal e-mail to dozens of others and even posted a message where I asked him not to post my private messages. After I saw his post, I sent him an e-mail telling him that he was dead to me. I never read any of his subsequent letters, so I can't tell you if he apologized again or rubbed it in my face. I didn't feel sad at all, I just felt kind of stupid. I fell for it again. Why did I ever trust anyone? In my mind I dragged Marc Parker into a hothouse full of pollen-filled flowers. I sprayed oven cleaner into his lungs and then stuffed his mouth with dog dander. He gasped for air and choked for a few minutes. He fell over and then his head turned purple before he died of a fatal asthma attack. I am sorry that it had to end this way, but it did. He's dead to me.

My wife's first adult job was as a temp accountant at the New York offices of a brokerage firm called Cantor Fitzgerald. She started in the summer between school years and the air was always thick with exhaust and ozone. I visited her a few times while she was at work because I know whenever I've had jobs, I love when people come to visit me. I still love to visit other people at work because I can lighten their day a little and when it's over, I don't have to go back to work.

Right beneath her office was a massive subterranean mall with restaurants, a huge Borders and probably six different flavors of the Gap. There were literally dozens of stores, a subway station, a PATH train to New Jersey and my wife's favorite afternoon coffee nook. I remember I would always drag her to the Borders because they had a zine section and one of my distributors was supposed to get my zine into Borders. My zine was never there, but I always looked. I don't think I knew why I was doing it then, but now I realize that if I could get my zine in there, it would be a symbolic beachhead on the shores of a nihilistic commerce center. It was a huge hive of activity: layers and layers of minions, attorneys, traders, bankers and the thousands of people who were what my wife would call "support staff." I thought, Man, wouldn't it be cool if one of those freakazoid Herbs picked up an issue of my zine and actually enjoyed it and started to think about what I'd said.

I wanted to reach a segment of the population that wouldn't typically read a zine because I never want to just preach to the converted. I've often told people that if you agree with everything I say in this zine you would probably frighten me in real life. But that's what I want—to reach people that don't care about what a zine is or isn't, but who want to read something interesting that has a point of view and is willing to just fucking say it.

My wife really liked Jim, who was her boss and in charge of Cantor's tax practice. From her description of their conversations, he sounded like Bill O'Reilly minus the asshole arrogance and woeful ignorance. She would regularly get into serious political and social discussions and find herself defending her own ideals with an adult who took her seriously. She liked him for that, and he always wanted her to come work for him. My wife always said that taking a job with him would be her fall-back position if nothing else panned out because she didn't want to do tax accounting as a career, even though she knew he would pay her very well and treat her even better.

Juli wanted me to meet Jim because we were the two main men in her life and it was important that we know each other. The other people in the office seemed a little stiff, but I am sure that's conforming to the stereotype about tax accountants. I am sure that taken out of context, some of the conversations between Juli and Jim might be considered inappropriate, but my wife has a very dirty mouth and I love her for it.

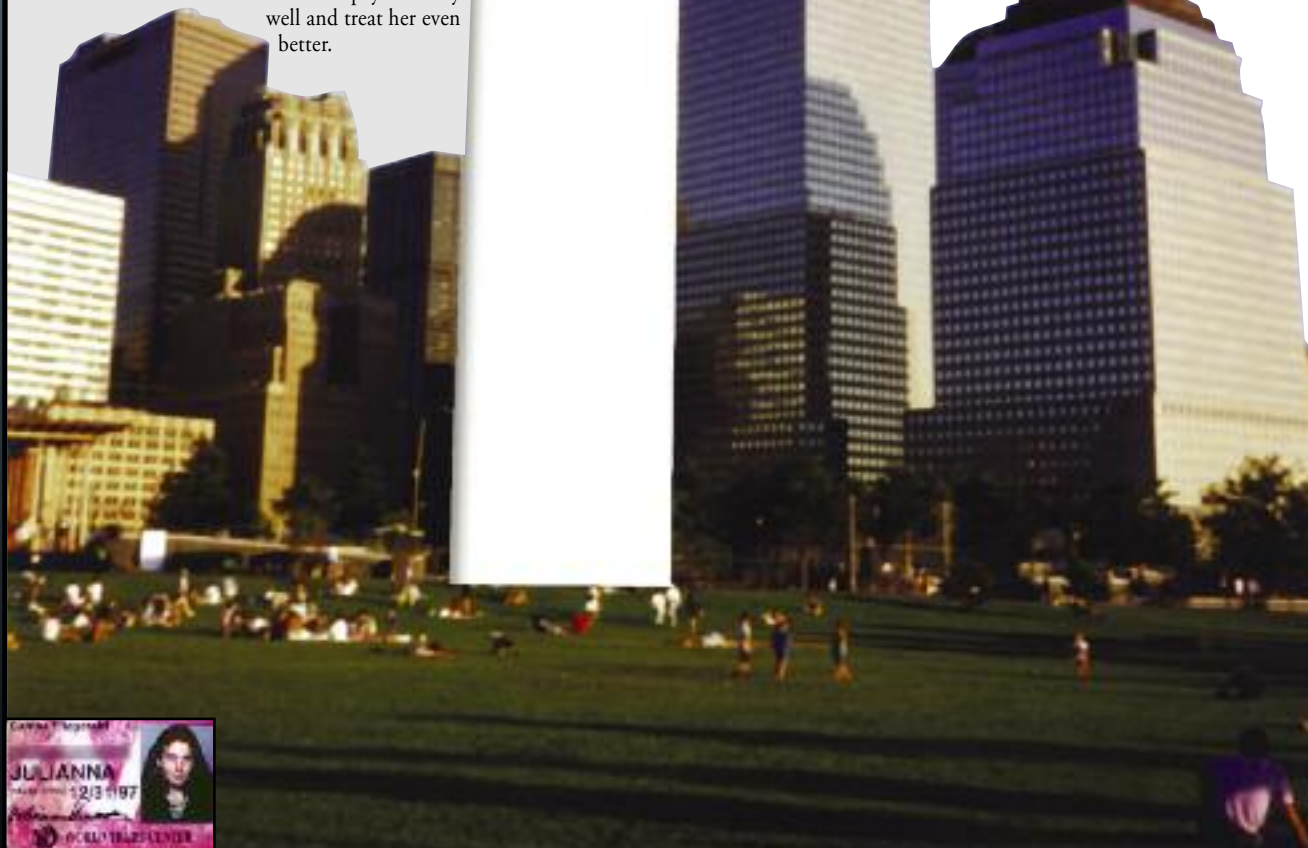
I met a few of the other people and I felt very out of place and underdressed. I wanted to see her little Dilbert cubicle and see all the places that she had told me about since she started there. The office was just like you would imagine it to be: a fluorescent cubicle farm with a bunch of somewhat nerdy people, mostly Jews and Asians, all working on crappy black PC laptops.

The office could have been anywhere in New York City because it was so nondescript. Before I left, my wife took me to the outside edges of the floor, where the big partners had their offices. Those guys had the best views in the world. Depending on which side of the building you were on you could see all of New Jersey, Staten Island, Brooklyn or upper Manhattan and you didn't have to pay a nickel or stand on line. It was the 104th Floor of the World Trade Center. The two main buildings were so big they had their own zip code.

I remember telling Juli that she shouldn't work on the anniversary of the first bombing of the World Trade Center no matter what. We saw an HBO movie called *Paths to Paradise* about the first bombing and the intention was to make one tower collapse onto the other one, taking them both down.

On September 11, Jim was getting to work late because he'd been working late the night before. He was waiting at the PATH train in New Jersey when the first plane hit. Everyone else in the office was trapped above the first plane and never made it out. All of those people, all of those desks, all of those computers and all of those lives are gone forever and they weren't just names on a board or photos on a flyer. There were 658 different people in Cantor's offices who died horribly that day, all people with families, dreams and a work ethic that compelled them to be at work on time.

They are all gone forever. Killing foreigners, blowing up towns and seizing oil wells is never going to bring any of them back. Nothing ever will.



Chronicles

As you read in “Dead to Me,” my old friend John Lewis Dickstein is absolutely deranged, but in a good way. He is the only person I’ve ever asked to contribute something to this zine and he’s such a lazy, crazy prick that he never sent me a submission. I decided to run some of his letters to me because they are the closest he’ll get to writing his story. I told him that I was writing “Karoshi” as the centerpiece of the zine and that if it had a theme, it was going to be about how work can damage you. I really wanted him to write about his work experience because he makes me look like a saint. He has no formal training at anything and left college very early. He’s taken more drugs than me, which is really saying something, and all of the other people in my circle that were friends with him are now all afraid of him and avoid him at all costs. When I talk about him they say, “Don’t mention me, please. Seriously. Don’t.” I’ve always had a soft spot for him not only because he was a lot of fun, but also because he made almost every experience that I had with him feel dangerous. *Anything* could happen. He would walk up to a girl to ask her if he could buy her a glass of his jism; he would tell a big muscle head that steroids caused your dick to shrink; and he used to be the singer for D-Cup and the Blue Balls, the worst band at my college. Almost all of the songs he wrote (and even those that we co-wrote) were about women ingesting semen in some capacity. Here’s a sample lyric: “Put a clamp on her tit / she ate the corn outta my shit.”

My friend Peter told me that he met John’s mother and stepfather at their home in Brooklyn. He said that John told Peter that his stepfather was a stupid asshole, in front of his stepfather, which we both agreed was typical Dickstein behavior. His stepfather was a large Italian man who Peter said was in the military. He physically threw them both out of the house as John continued to insult him. John usually made people hate him but the more they got upset, the bolder he got.

Dickstein had a way with women... who were deranged. One of the most infamous stories about John was the night that he came home with a woman that witnesses described as looking like a lizard lady. I am not sure if it was a forked tongue or scaly skin, but she was a very large, Amazonian woman and John is a swarthy, hairy little Jew. In the bathroom the next morning, his suitemates asked him what the hell he was thinking by having sex with the lizard lady. John tried to act like she was attractive and then the lizard lady flushed and came out of the stall. He is the kind of guy who tries to fuck every girl that he meets and from time to time he finds a girl who is on the verge of a breakdown who just wants attention. It’s like trying the handles of parked cars—eventually you’ll find one that’s unlocked and you can just jump on in.

We were all crazy, dangerous idiots for many years but at some point I grew up, calmed down a little bit and found pleasures outside of primal destruction and massive drug consumption. John got worse and worse. The last time we hung out together was when he was living with his mom and stepfather in Florida. My sister and I went to visit my grandmother and since we didn’t know anyone, we let him take us out to some night clubs. After the third night, he called my girlfriend back in NY and told her that I was fooling around with strippers and getting drunk all over Miami. It was a complete fabrication and my sister thought that he was really scary for making something like that up, but he was just fucking around. My girlfriend didn’t think it was funny, believed him and made my life miserable for a week when I returned.

At some point later, he started to think he was the second coming of Christ. He carried a Bible, wore a tweed suit and looked like he was completely dazed all the time. He told me to hold his hand to see if I could feel his bones growing. I didn’t feel anything but his sweaty palm and after that incident, he disappeared for years. He started e-mailing me out of the blue in 2000 and while I never gave him my phone

number or address, I did write to him regularly because I wanted to see what would have happened to me if I had made much worse choices with my life.

The thing that I have always respected about Dickstein is that as a person, he has been remarkably consistent. I know that I’ve changed a lot since Dickstein and I were friends in college, but on the whole, the changes have been improvements. I would imagine that we’re all supposed to improve ourselves, grow, mature, evolve, develop and turn from stupid kids into stupid adults. That’s why I don’t reflexively respect old people—just because you’ve survived doesn’t mean you know a goddamn thing and I’m guessing by the fact that you look unhealthy and miserable that you didn’t really plan this whole “old age” thing very well, so fuck you.

Dickstein always fancied himself a bit of a renegade Bukowski type, where his life was his art and he lived like every day was his last. He’s still out there, somewhere. He disappeared for the last six months but reappeared yesterday and said he wants me to publish his letters, but I should edit them, which I did. He said he’d been in Mexico and didn’t have access to e-mail but now he’s in Chicago doing something else that is dangerous. He always said he wanted to write about work and he came up with the title before he ever wrote a word of his story. It’s a great title.

You should know that every single thing in his letters is exactly how he wrote it. I have given it a good edit, taken out really obscure references and explained everything else in brackets. If the kids need a reason not to do drugs, here it is. Kids, do not try this at home. You’ll end up with pubic lice, a hangover and scars in hard-to-reach places.

dickstein’s special poetry place

Date: Fri, 23 Jun 2000 14:57:46

From: genpop@excite.com

To: negcap@yahoo.com

Subject: it’s in your eye it makes you cry you wanna die [a jism reference]

Hey Josh, I see your new mag is coming out soon. I wish I wasn’t so easily distracted; I want to write, but pussy, booze and travel always seem to get in my way. Here’s a special poem just for you.

Murder me

She said

And cover me with boiling oil

When I was 5, my father raped me

I’ll never forget the look he gave

When he came all over the bed

Murder me, she said

And piss on my ashes

My mother lived on valium

She beat my brother

Until he was autistic

If the earth would open up—I’d crawl inside

Murder me, she said

I love you, but you remind me of him

So we both must die

You first.

Jism and a can of kerosene,
Dickstein

Date: 7 Jul 2000 20:58:55

From: charlesbukowski@budweiser.com

To: negcap@yahoo.com

Subject: Take Some Mushrooms and Call Me in the Morning

Hey Josh,

I had been living in Florida for a couple of years. In September I got restless and bought a bus ticket for Seattle with the thought of working up in Alaska for a few months. I couldn't quit smoking pot for any length of time and the fishing companies drug test, so I abandoned the idea. I ended up in some redneck town near the Washington coast just north of Portland. I got lucky and landed a job tending bar at a casino, living in a motel, paying weekly.

Unfortunately, I became close friends with the local pot/speed dealer and had to bail town before the axe fell. Next, I went to Corvallis, Oregon. The local Jewish community was nice enough to get me a hotel room for a week. I washed dishes in some shithole and got myself fired so that I could get paid before my housing ended. I hopped a Greyhound to Dickinson, North Dakota. They have a program where you get 6 weeks in a motel courtesy of the state. I found a job waiting tables at a hotel, but sickened of the job after about 2 weeks. I spent the rest of my time drinking and watching cable. The worst pot I've ever smoked is in Dickinson. By now it was the end of February in the coldest place on Earth. I had enough money to get to the other end of the state, then caught a ride to Moorhead, Minnesota, where I promptly checked into detox. They recommended drug and alcohol treatment. The next day a van took me to Anoka, outside Minneapolis. I spent a month there. It was a nice vacation. I stayed sober for a little over 2 months. After treatment they sent me to a sober house in Minneapolis. The place sucked and smelled like dirty niggers. Luckily I found a job working on the graveyard shift for Wells Fargo bank. I took my first check and rented a room in a place that would have made Bukowski proud. I started fucking my supervisor, a dishy 5' 11" 26-year-old blonde. After about a month, I grew tired of the job, that petty bitch and my roach-infested closet of a room. I rode the Greyhound to Denver. It is now the beginning of June. I met a guy there at the hostel who had a qp [quarter pound] of skunk [cheap, smelly weed] and a lot of cash. I smoked and drank heavily all week. That Sunday I took a city bus west to Golden, stuck my thumb out with 5 bucks in my pocket and headed to Aspen.

So I'm standing on the freeway and after about an hour I start feeling frustrated. Finally some old man picks me up and tells me he's headed to Vail, about an hour away. After talking for a while he decides to take me all the way to Aspen. I get there about 3PM. I ring the doorbell to the Catholic Church. They usually let people stay there for a couple of days while looking for work or getting settled. I know in the morning I can go out and do construction and make \$10 an hour cash. A young priest answers the door, maybe late 20s. I tell him part of my story, he lets me in, takes me to my room and gives me a \$15 voucher for the market. The next morning, I wake up, walk outside and smoke one of the joints my roommate gave me in Denver. It's June, but about 40 degrees. The pot clears my head. I shower, then hop on the free bus to mountain temp service. The nice South African guy who owns the place asks me how I've been (it's been a few years) and immediately sends me out to work digging ditches for the county. I get back that night and the priest tells me I can only stay for one more night. I pick up the phone and make a reservation for Tuesday at the youth hostel in Glenwood Springs (down valley about 40 miles away). On Tuesday I go back to my ditch digging. The agency asked me if I wanted to work on Wednesday, too. I tell them my situation and they happily tell me about

John Lewis
Dickstein is as
crazy as he
sounds, trust me.
He was not
posing for this
picture either.

their new office outside Glenwood and set me up for work there on Wednesday. I arrive in Glenwood on Tuesday night with about \$150 and the last joint from Denver. The guy who owns the hostel is some old dago faggot who I've known for years, but every time he sees me he never remembers me or my name. I check in to the "luxury" dorms (small rooms, no lockout, 3 bucks more) and pay for 3 nights. I walk over to the liquor store and buy a big bottle of red shiraz, drink it with a rare NY strip and some asparagus. I meet some guy from Rhode Island who's about our age. We crack each other up and smoke my last joint. Morning comes and I don't make it to work. Luckily, it's a temp thing and they don't really care. I spend the day walking around town and drinking Chianti. That night 2 girls check in from Pennsylvania, both 21. The blonde one seems to dig me after hearing my crazy guitar songs. I hung out with the girls and a couple of English guys that night and get rip roaring drunk. Thursday, I was in no shape to work again, but began to panic because my money was running out. Friday, I finally went to work, landscaping for some rich guy. I did a good job and he asked me to come back on Saturday. Turns out the guy was Jewish, so he gave me a \$100 tip and his wife cooked me dinner. Saturday night I went out with the Penn girls and my roommate Don, a crazy, balding, 40-year-old disbarred lawyer. Kelly (the blonde) and I got really drunk together and took the best mushrooms I ever had. Her roommate got picked up by some guy who looked like Antonio Banderas. We walked back to the hostel and started fucking around. I had her long legs over my shoulders and her big milky tits in my mouth. I guess the slurping sound woke people up and one of the hostel workers stopped us right before I was ready to stick it in her ass. Being young, naive and shrooming, she started crying and ran back to her room. A few minutes later Don came back from the bar. I was really tripping hard at that point. We went back to our room and turned the lights on and made a lot of noise. On Sunday, Gary told us to get the fuck out. We rented a hotel room by the week. I stayed in Glenwood for about 2 more weeks, but I really wanted to get down to Durango for July 4th. One day, I just packed up my shit and left. On the way to Durango, I stopped off in Crested Butte for a couple of days to relax

and score some nugs
[nuggets of weed]. I got to
Durango on July 1st. I
found a job cooking at

THE ONLY GOOD JOB IS A BLOWJOB

BY JOHN-LEWIS
DICKSTEIN

some local hellhole for \$7 an hour. It was the kind of place where the work never stops and the other people have worked there forever. The hostel put the "s" in shithole, so I checked out of there and into the local homeless shelter, which was nicer, and free. I worked 8 days straight in that place. Finally, I couldn't take it anymore. I walked behind the bar and poured myself a pitcher of Guinness. Then I threw a rib eye on the grill. I walked back to my prep station and started chugging the beer right in front of the owner. A couple of minutes later I brought the steak over, too. The next morning I picked up my check for \$600. I left Durango and headed out on the highway toward Moab, Utah. [I think at this point in the story John is actually starting to evaluate his own life rather than just stumbling through it blindly. I kept thinking that at some point he would see how the bad choices he was making were not getting him closer to anything that he wanted but he only turned inward briefly. I really never thought a person could get through life behaving this way but he has proven me wrong. He's not doing anything particularly nice and I doubt anyone would say he's successful, but he is living his life on his own terms and you have to respect that. Or maybe I'm the only idiot being fooled.]

Date: 2 Sep 2000 21:05:08
From: charlesbukowski@budweiser.com
To: negcap@yahoo.com
Subject: Blonde Girls with Big Tits and a Blowtorch

Hey Josh

I guess it's going to take more installments to finish the story. I'll go with the tradition of Russian improv and make it a troika. Hope the world isn't raping you too much.

The moment I get on the highway, some old Santa-looking hippie picks me up in a station wagon. He immediately tells me that he's going to Moab, too, and he's got a few pounds of nasty brown shwag [weed, again] in the trunk and glove box. He invites me to take "a taste." I grab about a half z [ounce] and put it in my teabox. We take the back roads through the mountains. He turns out to be an old drunk, too. By the time we get to Moab, 5 hours later, we're both thoroughly fucked up on cheap whiskey, weed and Budweiser. I check into the hostel and am happily surprised that it's only \$8 a night. I pay for the week, then go outside and roll a blunt with half the shit that Santa gave me. I got about 6 people high and then caught a ride to the market with a Nazi from Switzerland. He shows me a picture of his girl and family. I mention that I'd love to fuck his sister if she ever came to America. He tells me if it wasn't his sister he'd fuck her, too. After that I knew he was alright. We spent the rest of the day bbqing and drinking. I woke up early on Tuesday and met these 2 guys from Bellingham, Washington who'd been living at the hostel for about a month. They had some dank ass BC [British Columbian] bud and were happy to smoke me out and sell me some. I gave the rest of that wacky shit away. We hung out drinking cheap white wine and smoking. They had this hot 22-year-old 6-foot tall mountain biking chick with them. Amazingly, nobody was fucking her. I think they were scared. We got to talking and she mentioned that she was getting ready to go to massage therapy school in the fall. My back was badly sunburned (it's about 120 degrees in Moab in July). She took me to her room and rubbed tea tree oil on my back and shoulders. She had beautiful blue eyes and jet-black straight hair like a Mick. After the Kelly experience in Glenwood, I was feeling ambivalent toward women and sex in general, but she was really cool. I turned around and started kissing her on the lips and neck. She immediately pulled out my raging cock and started sucking it rapidly. I told her to take her shirt off and to suck on my hairy balls. Her tits were much bigger than I thought; (she was almost 6' 2" and kind of broad). I couldn't take it anymore and jammed my fat dick deep inside of her. She straddled me and threw her Lindsay Davenport-like legs over my shoulders. Finally, I pulled out and came all over her, the walls, the bed and her cat. It was the only time we fucked but it was great and I really needed it physically and emotionally. The weirdest thing is, I forgot her name [it's not weird that you forget things when you drink and take drugs all the time, but whatever.com].

Later that week, I went to Burger King for 2 Whoppers for \$2 and got the worst case of food poisoning ever. I puked for 2 days straight, slept a lot and got blitzed on weed and Valium. After 3 days I started feeling normal again (for me), and went hiking in Arches National Park with the Nazi, the girl and 2 stoner dudes. We climbed up this thing called cable arch, straight up on a cable about 300 feet. You know I'm not the athletic type, but I had a great time. I left Moab on Monday with about \$100 and some weed and caught a ride with some wop from Boston who lived in Boulder. We spent the night in Crested Butte then he left in the morning. I got on the highway and started hitching. I was headed to Taos, New Mexico.

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Date: 1 Oct 2000 14:23:04
From: charlesbukowski@budweiser.com
To: negcap@yahoo.com
Subject: I Love Getting Sucked Off on the Greyhound

You filthy faggot, first you chastise me for not writing you back, then you take twice as long to reply to me; you really suck a nigger's cock. [I debated whether or not to edit this out because he's not really a racist, he's just a psychopath, but in the interests of full disclosure and complete honesty, I'll just make some half-assed, liberal guilt disclaimer in brackets and publish exactly what he wrote.] Anyway, I'm finally home. My parents read your mag [this zine] and said it was left wing soft-core trash, so it must be good. [I like that review but I don't think I'm left-wing, I think I'm smart-wing. I hope with this issue they will now think of this zine as left-wing *hardcore* trash.] They've hid it on me, but when I find it, I'll read it. I just spent three days on the bus. Other than getting my dick sucked by some married redhead on day one, the trip was awful, although free thanks to the Jews in Boise. I spoke to [Chris] Hoffman, he said you guys had a big fight; he's not mad anymore, so call him. You fucks need to stick together to protect yourselves from guys like me. If you want to hear about the rest of my trip, write back, you fucking bisexual, Napoleon-looking, matzo ball-eating, shiksa-marrying, commie prick. [The only true statement in that delightful stream of slurs is that I do indeed eat matzo ball soup whenever my wife makes it—it's absolutely delicious!]

Love Always,
Dickstein

[Note from the dates that I wrote back to him the very same day]

Date: 2 Oct 2000 23:58:33
From: charlesbukowski@budweiser.com
To: negcap@yahoo.com
Subject: Chris Hoffman Loves Fucking Hookers and Fat Girls

Hey Josh, thanks for writing back. Sorry about the drama—I've had a rough week. My mom literally burned your mag (a la Hitler), so if you could send me another copy I'd appreciate it. Actually, as an adult I'm probably more like my Dago stepfather than any kike in my family. There's a lot of Sicilian in my actions and temperament. I keep meaning to call Jay, but somehow I never get around to it. I think you and I are the only ones left with a sense of humor. Everybody else from my past can suck my kosher kielbasa. I'll continue my story with my next letter. A year on the road made me much crazier, but it was what I needed to help my writing. I really don't want to be a 40-year-old fry cook. If you didn't already know, this country is very fucked up; I know, I've been everywhere. Hope you and your family are doing well. If you drop your keys, kick 'em to Berkeley. [Uh, don't think so.] Please write soon. I'll smoke one for you.

Dropping the Soap of Life,
John-Lewis Dickstein

Date: 22 Nov 2000 04:40:51
From: charlesbukowski@budweiser.com
To: negcap@yahoo.com
Subject: Fat Chicks, B134 and a Hallway on Fire

[The subject is a reference to three things. Fat chicks is something we all tried to avoid in college, and that's pretty obvious. B134 was the suite number where we lived at SUNY Purchase. The hallway on fire happened when we were taking acid in my friend Jim's room. He had a wheelchair even though he didn't need it—he was just a weirdo. He also had the only tattoo I've ever liked, a small π on his hand. We decided that it would be a cool stunt to set the floor on fire and push me through the fire in the wheelchair. It was like *Jackass* but without the money, safety equipment, training or cameras to record it. We poured a puddle of grain alcohol in the hall by the stairs and once the fire was going, Dickstein pushed me through. When the fire alarms started going off, we threw water on the fire and then ran like hell. By the time an RA got there, the fire was out and the smoke had dissipated so it looked like a false alarm.]

Hey, Josh, sorry about the wait. I don't have much time to myself anymore. I'm working 3 jobs now and trying to go to the gym 5 times a week, with no car, here in hell. I managed to find some good pot off this kid at work (he delivers, too) so that helps, but unfortunately not enough. I animate myself every morning with a load of vitamins and supplements. Then in the evening, I smoke and drink myself into oblivion. Anyway, I read the shit you wrote about me. I forgot about the [Robyn] Hitchcock show and the whippets [see "The Only Live Review I'll Ever Write," in *NegCap* #3]. Lisa Cramp [my ex-girlfriend Gina's sister] got me those tickets. Yeah I was really fucked up that night (and every night). I don't know about you being able to whip my ass. I'm pretty diesel and can lift over 200 pounds. Plus I play in a hoops league every Wednesday and have mad skills at the point (a la Nick Van Exel). I'm sure your wife looks good—you're not an idiot; as for [Chris] Hoffman, money doesn't mean shit, I'm sure I look twice as good as him and get way hotter bitches [that I might argue with because Chris has always been able to get good looking girls]. Guys like him peak out in college. If he hates me, oh, well, I'm his oldest friend (since 7th grade) and if he likes his world full of greedy, selfish, using assholes, so be it. [Peter] Lopez has always been a cool, easygoing guy and Jay will always be Jay—both those guys are okay in my book. Yeah, Chris has always lived in a nice tidy upperclass box. He's a throwback to the brokers back in 1929 who jumped out their office windows when they realized they were broke. He'd cry like a bitch if he had to walk in my shoes or even yours. It's hard being a creative guy—everybody either hates you or wants to be you. The only thing that matters is the *motherfucking art*. I think it's great that you've been fired from several jobs for speaking your mind or just being a general freak. You'll never catch up to me. [I am not trying to compete with him at all, I concede that John has me beat and I'll never catch up.] I've got an idea about how many women I've fucked. I have no clue about the hundreds of jobs I've had in the past 15 years. That's okay, it's probably better that way.

I know you get a lot of requests, but if possible I'd like to write a short article for your next mag, about what is up to you. I think it will help us both. I've gotten no pussy since I got to Florida. I really hate it here. I didn't take that place so I'm stuck at home, at least through Christmas, but I don't care, I really just sleep here. My parents are making me save half of what I make (which is surprisingly a lot). So if I bail, at least it will be with a car and a few grand. I still think a lot about my past and how things could've been different, maybe as a lawyer or a stand-up comic. Then I realize the jails would be empty and more people would be crying then laughing, so I guess I'm doing all right.

I see you've won the *Writer's Digest* zine award so I guess that means you're ahead of me in the writing department. If I had a Master's degree, I'd probably be fucking a lot of co-eds. I hope your hard work pays off, Josh. You definitely deserve it. Unfortunately, history has proven that lazy bums like me usually end up famous.

Your Boy,
John-Lewis Dickstein

Date: 30 Apr 2001 02:39:11
From: genpop@excite.com
To: negcap@yahoo.com
Subject: Rich Guys are Usually Cheap Fucks [another nugget of wisdom]

Hey, Josh, I'm still in Salt Lake City, staying at my friend's hostel. If you think San Francisco is boring and the pot sucks, you should take a trip here. My money is almost gone and, of course, my weed is long gone. I probably need to go out this week and find a job. As you already know, I'm one of the laziest bastards in history, except for maybe Jay or John Tormey [the "Retarded Hesh" on page 10]. So the thought of meaningless labor makes me cringe. I've been helping out around here by being the housekeeper and general bitch. Tomorrow some ho is moving in to take that job. It will free me up for worse and more profitable labor. My toned body is no more. I sit around, drink beer, eat high-fat meals, watch TV, play video games and jerk off. [This is exactly what I think most guys do when their spouses/owners leave them unsupervised. I substitute, like I do in every restaurant, and replace beer with pot, and we're good to go.] I met some guy at a club last night. He said a group of skinheads wanted to kick his ass. He immediately whipped out his dick and started stroking it. The Nazis were so freaked out they ran away. True story. I thought you'd like to hear it.

Glad you had an interesting time at the Learning Annex [see "A Date with Al Goldstein" on page 12]. Hoffman and I took a course there called "MBA in a Nutshell." I guess it worked for him. [It must have. Chris quit being a stockbroker to start his own company and Shecky's is actually a pretty successful publishing venture. These days he's hosting parties, selling VIP access and is becoming a well-known bar guide. At the end of 2003 he gave me tickets to a huge New Year's Eve party that his company threw and he is by far the most successful person I know from college.] I called him before I left Florida. We spoke briefly. He said he'd call me back. The rich fuck never did. I guess I remind him of his humble roots and of a part of him he wants to keep buried. He probably has no sense of humor anymore. I'm sure he loves Adam Sandler movies. It's good that you're keeping busy. I'm bored to tears. I'm used to smoking turbo pot everyday but I have no pot and now my clear thinking is annoying me. I brought up Tormey earlier. I sometimes wonder if he's in prison or married to an heiress. Either way, I wouldn't be shocked. Last time I saw him, his house in Tucson had been riddled with bullets after a New Year's party. I thought I was having trouble meeting decent women because I was in Florida. I'm having trouble here, too. I guess it's me. The beer here is watered down. You can drink a 12-pack and not get drunk. I miss smoking real pot. The shit here gives you a headache. Anyway, I'd still like to write an article for your next mag. If you think the job theme will work (it did for Miller and Bukowski), then I'll go with that. I feel like a nervous wreck. Not enough sleep, too much beer and caffeine. My parents are going up to NY this week. Most of my older relatives are dying. I live pretty heavy, so I probably won't make it that long. I don't think I'd like to go down slowly; the years sucking you dry until you fall apart—a whisper of what you once were. I'm sorry Hoffman didn't pay you well for your bar reviews. I'm sure they were well written. I guess he needs the money for other things: Viagra, 16-year-old hookers and enemas. [John loved to remind Chris that he had lost his virginity to a hooker that John helped pay for.] I hope all is going well with the wife, work and your family. It's hard for me sometimes. I know there's a gold mine in my head. I'm just too lazy to start mining.

May Lee Be with You,
John-Lewis Dickstein

Date: 30 Jul 2001 20:02:08
From: charlesbukowski@budweiser.com
To: negcap@yahoo.com
Subject: My Balls are Roasting Slowly by the Olympic Torch

Hey, Josh, sorry it's been so long. I haven't been able to get on the computer much. I'm still trapped here in Salt Lake City, working at my

friend's hostel. I've hooked up with a couple of girls since you last heard from me. Both were blondes from the Northeast in their early 20s. My boss walked in the other day while I was getting jerked off. I told him next time to give me a minute's notice so I can nut all over the wall, like that movie *Happiness*. I've been extremely lazy in finding regular work. My last job was working as the pizza chef at Romano's Macaroni Grill. I think I lasted 2 weeks before I asked the chef to fire me so I could get paid. It was one of those mega-corporate type shitholes where they expect you to wait a month before you get a paycheck. I tried really hard to get fired the regular way (coming in an hour late, drunk, high, sexual harassment, eating a lot) but none of that seemed to work. So one day I came in and straight out asked the prick to can me. He obliged, but it still took me 2 weeks and a lot of phone calls to their corporate office before I finally got all of my money. I wish people would realize that when I work in their hellhole and they try to fuck with my pay, they'll never hear the end of it until I'm paid in full. Oh, well. [It was this sentence that made me want to run these letters from Dickstein because we are both exactly the same when it comes to getting paid for our work. I wrote a review of the Ron Jeremy documentary *Porn Star* for a shitty little newspaper called *Film Festival Reporter* and they told me that they would pay me \$50 for 400 words. I wrote a great review and they published it, but it took me nine months, a fake letter from a lawyer and threats of physical harm before

John Dickstein ruins
my pin toy forever.

I got the cocksucker to mail me a check from his personal account for a measly \$50. I didn't even need the money that badly but I'll be dipped in shit before I let some asshole get over on me for even a nickel, especially when I've done good work. I was ready to go down to the guy's office and beat the shit out of him if I had to, just to prove my point. Dickstein's right, people shouldn't fuck with crazy Jews like us.]

Speaking of hell, it's over 100 here every day. I thought I was being smart leaving Florida, but honestly my life is more fucked up here than it was there. I'm eating a lot and not really doing much. All that work I put in to get into peak shape went down the tubes. I'm 5' 9" and 180—if I played in the NFL I'd be the right weight. Anyway, I'm going to make one final run at working and my goal is to get out of here and on the west coast by Aug. 14 (my 34th birthday). That last blonde girl lives in Portland and I can stay with her when I get there. I hope your mag is going okay. I guess the bottom line is: if you're creative, every day job sucks. [Truer words were never spoken.] I keep meeting these rich young girls. Maybe I should marry one, then maybe I can write; or maybe I'd just drink and smoke myself to death. Speaking of smoke, the weed here is shit. I finally got a good connection (finding kind [good weed] is impossible) but they're teenagers and they're always on me to get them booze. There are a lot of psychos here in SLC. I guess this is the dumping ground for the Rocky Mountain states. Best wishes to the wife and your family. [It's fascinating how he goes from name-calling to courtesy and kindness, but the ultimate irony of John Dickstein is that he's the biggest psycho out there yet he calls some teens who want booze "psychos."]

Please Write Soon,
D-Cup & the Dickstein

Date: Sat 11 Aug 2001 23:45:08

From: genpop@excite.com

To: negcap@yahoo.com

Subject: People Shouldn't Fuck with Crazy Jews

Hey, Josh, I hope you enjoyed reading my brand of cyber terrorism. [John had sent me many links to a youth hostel message board where he had bad-mouthed his former employers. He said that there were rats in his room, the owners ripped him off, stuff got stolen, the food made him sick, etc.] Those fucking bastards decided to sell the hostel and basically fired me at 6AM on Thursday and when I asked them for my pay they told me to go fuck myself. I've known Soc's family my whole life (they own Caravelle in Brooklyn). Marty I've known for five years. He's always been a crazy faggot rich boy, but I never expected to get treated like this by strangers, let alone two of my oldest friends. File them under dead [see "Dead to Me" on page 48] with Hoffman and Lee... Anyway, I'm headed to Denver via Amtrak. My train leaves at 4AM. I got a job working at the hostel and guesthouse there. The guy who owns it is pretty nice and there's much better weed and smuttier bitches. Those guys are really stupid rich fucks. I have their names, birth dates and SS #'s. They don't realize how much shit I can smother them in. Very few people realize how crazy and vindictive I am when I am fucked with... I guess you're one of the lucky few. I searched for my name on your web site. I was sad that nothing popped up. Maybe you can post some of my letters on there. I'll still write my unabridged job story for you if you're willing to publish it. Maybe you weren't born to write. Maybe you're my John Martin. I'll be happy to shove a black sparrow up your ass. [FYI, John Martin founded Black Sparrow, a company that published the poems of Charles Bukowski.] I'm going to hop on Network Solutions and register dirtysanchez.com. [Someone else already has it, sorry... I checked] Please write soon...

Dickstein

Date: 14 Sep 2001 17:45:01

From: charlesbukowski@budweiser.com

To: negcap@yahoo.com

Subject: 34 and Still Broke

Hey, Josh, I hope your move to NY went OK. I spent the past 2 weeks in Seattle, courtesy of the Jewish community. They put me up in a nice motel in north Seattle. I went from Colorado to Washington via Amtrak,

courtesy of a first class ticket that some rich guy was nice enough to pay for (no, I didn't have to suck his cock). I'm now in some hick town in between Seattle and Portland. I have about \$50 left. Amtrak is booked and the idea of paying \$20 to Greyhound for a two-hour ride doesn't thrill me. After I finish this letter, I'm going to the on-ramp on I-5 and sticking my thumb out... Good thing you didn't stay with Hoffman, his loft is probably full of World Trade rubble. [When I told Hoffman I was planning to move back to NYC, he offered to let me and Juli stay with him in his lower Manhattan apartment. He didn't have a loft and he was not hit by any rubble.] I hope you liked my new postings on hostels.com. If you really want to laugh go on their web site and see who the page editor is for Utah. I didn't think it would happen again. Broke and almost winter. Every time I go back to Florida and get set up, I feel trapped. We should probably get together and write a screenplay. We can retire on the hundred grand... So if you ever wondered what would happen if you picked up and left your middle class existence, look at me. Yeah, I fuck a lot of cute random chicks (and get my dick sucked). The downside is how easy it is to run out of loot or resources. I hope things are going well for you and your wife. If anyone has put the work in to finally get a break, it's probably you. But unfortunately we know throughout history, lazy bums like me usually become famous.

Please Write Soon,
John-Lewis Dickstein

Date: 2 Oct 2001 12:17:52
From: genpop@excite.com
To: negcap@yahoo.com
Subject: Every Day is Yom Kippur

On Fri, 20 Sep 2001 16:03:56, Josh Saitz wrote:

Dickstein-

I am moving today. I scanned those pictures as promised, I hope your e-mail address is still working but I'll send it to both that I have... Take care and I will talk to you when I land again. —Josh [In addition to this letter, I also attached the images on this page and the opposite page, which John had not seen in a long time, if ever.]

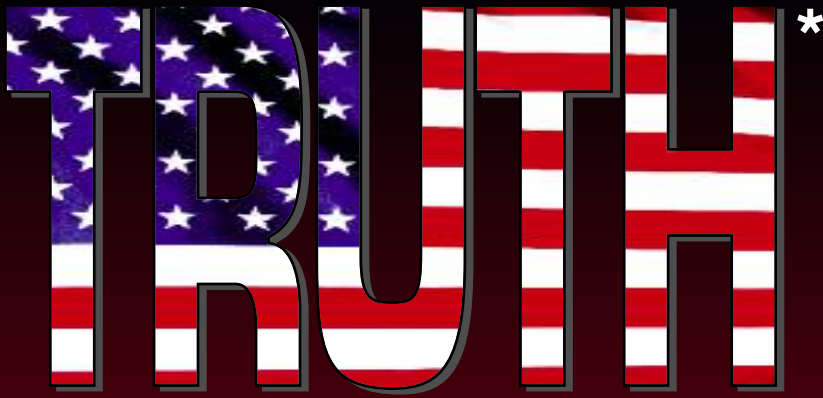
Hey, Josh, I'd forgotten about those photos. I'm still quite mentally unstable, but not as much as back then. I ended up in detox about a week ago in Boise, Idaho. They doped me up pretty good and sent me on my way the next day. I tried to get money from the Jewish community there. They remembered me from last time and their lawyer told me to go fuck myself. I spent Yom Kippur in Sun Valley, Idaho. I



was put up in a nice hotel, but instead of attending services, I ran into the guys who dropped me off for "one beer," got sloppy drunk and stoned with them and passed out in the room. The next morning I caught a ride with a trucker to Ogden, Utah. I went to closing services there and they fed me and put me up at the Days Inn and threw me some cash. I got stuck for the weekend in northeastern Nebraska. One night the cops got me a room. The next night I was on my own. Luckily, I still had some cash left. The old biker who owned the place didn't charge me much and warned me about the rednecks in the area and mentioned that shaving my beard might be a good idea (Dickstein bin Laden?). I got lucky in the morning. An old guy who had been a guest of Hitler during WWII picked me up and 3 hours later I was in Lincoln. I had about \$20 left and paid \$10 for the hostel and went out and drank a pitcher of Busch. I wasn't sure if I'd head out today. I'm pretty road weary and sick of traveling. I called the Jews here a little while ago. They had helped me out about 4 years ago, but I guess they're nice and will help me again. The dude from the synagogue is meeting me at the hostel at 5PM to pay my rent for the night and is trying to get in touch with the rabbi or his daughter to get me some cash. It would help cause I have about 2 bucks left. I had a big lunch, but I still need to eat and drink tonight. So here you have it, a piece of how I live now, 13 years after I whipped my cock out for your camera. Pretty fucked up, but somehow I seem to keep it rolling without sleeping on the street or at the rescue mission. If this will make me a better writer, I don't know. I hope it makes me a better person.

Dickstein

John is still out there, so send your e-mail to dickstein@negcap.com!



www.whitehouse.gov

* lie

Who Helped With This?

Everything in this zine was written, designed, photographed and digitally manipulated by Josh Saitz, except for the Maxi-Rant™, which was shouted by Juli Saitz and “The Only Good Job is a Blowjob,” which was lived and written by the one and only John Lewis Dickstein and edited by Josh.

The cover was conceived and digitally enhanced by Josh but photographed by the incredibly talented Garrett Holden. The G man also shot the back cover, “Dashing Political Aspirations,” in his hip apartment and he designed the OCD Infinity logo after months of prodding. He’s going to break tradition with my previous contributors and remain my friend. We had help with the cover from Peter Lopez of the infamous peterlopez.com, Peter’s sister Virginia, and her husband Harris, who acted as Fire Marshal. The picture of my feet for “Dead to Me” was taken by Sara Zamor and I would like to thank her for indulging me and my silly ideas. I also have to thank her for Madison, the cutest baby in the world! Superpal Katie Kretschmer was our guest proofreader but all the mistakes you read were mine. Clint Johns at Tower Records is a cool fucking guy and has been an emotional and financial supporter of this zine since the very beginning, so he has helped in less obvious, but equally significant ways. Thanks to everyone!

Contractual Obligations

There is no contest this issue but if there is enough interest (send me an e-mail saying you want a new contest) I will do a contest in my next issue. I could actually get some cool prizes nowadays. If you want the answers to the last quiz, they’re on the web site. I would like to congratulate the following winners from the contest in *NegCap* #3 and let them make their plugs, which was a part of the prize package that each of them won.

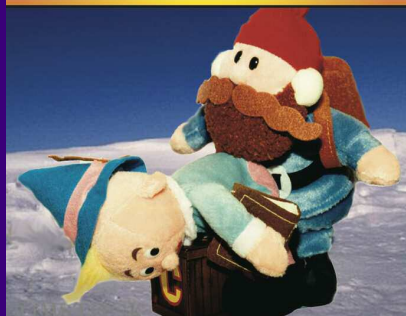
Our first winner lives in Tokyo and she would like to say, “ANDREA HOPE does not have a zine of her own, but lives vicariously through the zines of others, one of which is *Pearshaped*—a shadowy flight into the feminine mystique, or something. Anyway, it has received fan mail from a men’s prison. E-mail her at guzuguzu@yahoo.com and she’ll hook you up with a copy. She would also like to use this forum to say a public ‘fuck you’ to Billy De Cola, Scott Lawson, and all the gang at Ocean English school in Nagoya—you’re all sleazy, lying, cheating, cock-sucking assholes. Especially you, Billy. Andrea would also like to sincerely thank Josh for his love and devotion and for making her name forever associated with penises. God bless.” Andrea has made numerous contributions to this zine, not the least of which is this excellent plug/entry. When I was finished with this issue, I wanted to call it the “Payback’s a Bitch” issue, but I find doing special issues like that really lame. And besides, *every* issue is the “Payback’s a Bitch” issue. I should make that the name of the zine at this point.

Our next contest winner would like to say, “Hi, my name is ERIC LYDEN and I am the winner of last issue’s *NegCap* trivia contest. As part of my prize I get to say a few words in this here issue to plug my own little zine. It is called *Fish with Legs* and it is mostly about me—what I think, what I do... when I say it like that it sounds really self-centered, but it’s not.

It’s really quite a funny publication if I do say so myself. To check it out just send \$1 and one stamp to Eric Lyden, 224 Moraine St., Brockton, MA 02301-3664 or send e-mail to me at ericfishlegs@aol.com.” Eric is actually being rather modest, which is one of his many charms as a writer. His zine is hilarious and I’m going to recycle my piece, “Did You Know?????” for his next *Fun Facts* issue, with some bonus facts. Few people can write interesting lists of fun facts about themselves, besides what they eat and what TV shows they watch, and Eric is one of those lucky few talented people. Get a web site already, huh, Eric?

JOHN ENDICOTT wants to plug others instead of himself, which is within his rights: “Go visit the following sites: <www.stevhoffman.tv/forums> Ostensibly dedicated to the mastering work of host Steve Hoffman, this forum is a gold mine of discussions on recordings and music of all sorts—not to mention audio equipment, visual media and other stuff. Anyone who is into music could waste hours upon hours here. <www.kk.org/cooltools/index.php> Remember the *Whole Earth Catalog*? Before it fell victim to squishy political correctness, it was a nexus for all sorts of neat, innovative stuff. Former editor Kevin Kelly has started a web site (and limited edition series of books) devoted to the original *Whole Earth* motto ‘Access to Tools.’ Here’s how KK puts it: ‘Here are my recommendations for cool tools. I include books, gadgets, software, videos, maps, hardware, materials, web sites or gear that are extraordinary, little-known, or reliably handy for an individual or small group. I depend on friends and readers to suggest things they actually use. Particularly welcomed are old items that you still dote on after years of use. I only post things I like and I ignore the rest. Suggestions for tools much better than what is recommended here are always wanted. I mail out a few cool-tool reviews each week to a small list of cool-tool fanatics. These are later posted here. But if you’d like to be on the list, send me one cool tool review and I’ll add you to it.’ E-mail him at kk@kk.org to tell him what you love.”

Misfit Toys

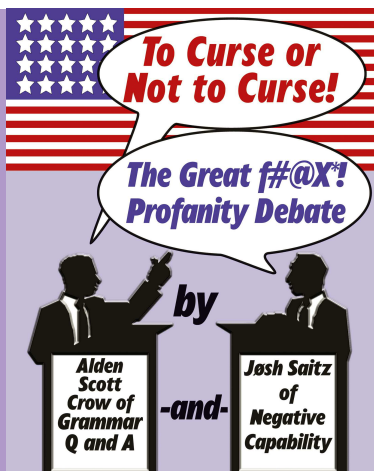


words for this sprawling, hilarious, profane and original CD audiozine. It features me speaking a mile a minute with original stories, comedy, obscure samples, two great songs by Peter, a profile of serial killer Ed Kemper (who I wrote about in *NegCap* #2), my actual last will and testament and much more. We had a blast making this CD and it shows. Remastered to 80 minutes and updated with bonus tracks, only \$10.



T-SHIRT

Bill Gates is the richest dick in the world not because he has innovated, but because he has brazenly stolen or swindled innovations from others. Larry King is a creepy old man who should retire or die as soon as possible. God, I hate both those pricks. This original design is available on a glorious black T-shirt. Show the world these two fuckwads in their actual mugshots and help prove that the rich and famous are often total scumbags in their private lives. It also makes a great gift for your sullen teen! I'll even tell you what they were arrested for, if you ask nicely. I have only 6 shirts left, so they're \$20 until I run out.



NEG CAP DVD VOL 1

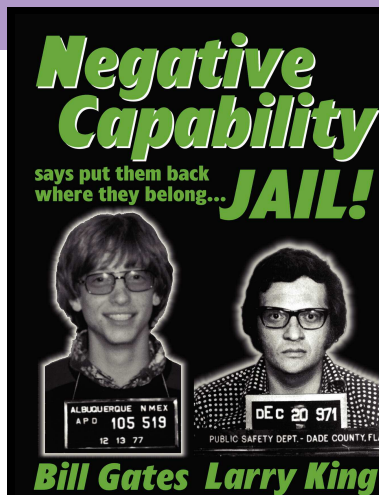
I was invited to Yale University to speak about zines and other alternative media and I recorded my hilarious presentation as well as a panel discussion that I moderated which included the charming Jeff Yamaguchi from *Working for the Man* and others from the alternative media. We talk about current media issues, the war, our various projects and much more. In addition there is a radio interview I did while on E (I think you can tell) and a slideshow containing all the art I've ever used for the zine and the web site, plus this issue in Hi-Res color PDFs (available on CD for \$4). I filled the DVD to the brim so you'd feel like you got your money's worth since most DVD extras suck and it's just \$12.

MISFIT TOYS

Peter Lopez did the music and I wrote the

NEG CAP 2

The sophomore effort cranks the volume all the way up to 11. Pound for pound one of the densest zines ever made, it is full to the brim with hilarious hate. My design skills improved immensely and this blockbuster issue includes the original OCD? Not Me!, Eat Me, How to Name Everything, I Am A Gay Homosexual, The Profaci Game (about *Law & Order* and so much more), I'd Rather Be A Killer Than A Victim, original fiction and analysis and my disgusting ad parody. There are less than 100 left so they are \$4 until I have 20, when the will price go up.



THE GREAT PROFANITY DEBATE

Alden Scott Crow and I debate the merits of profanity in modern writing in this funny and unique debate zine that I co-wrote and designed. It's a thought-provoking look at a topic that most other publications can't even touch without having to censor the fucking debate itself. I only have 20 goddamn copies left, signed, numbered and dated 2004 for just \$2, which is the original cover price, so get this shit while you still can.

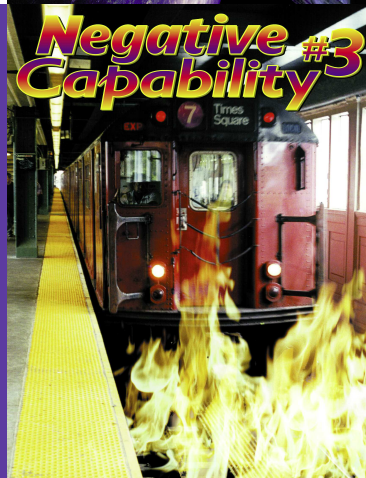
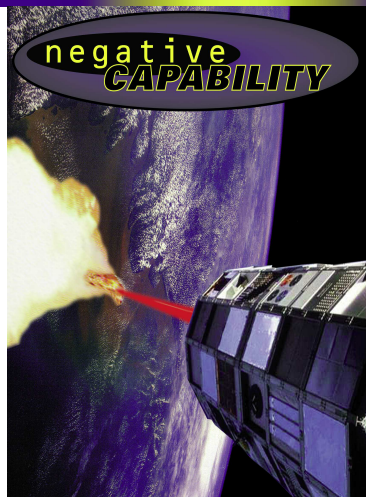


NEG CAP 1

The issue that started it all includes the classic life lessons: Let Me Warn You, My Life as a Pedophile/Fitness Instructor/Bisexual/Porn Star, My Best Friend is a Junkie!, The Eighth and Ninth Circles of Hell, More Savant Than Idiot, the original *NegCap* Manifesto, Hitler in Shorts and all the cursing you've come to expect. There are only 25 copies left and they are numbered, signed and dated 2004. This is the last time this issue will be available from me. They're \$30 until they're gone.

NEG CAP 3

This is the issue that won the stupid fucking *Writer's Digest* Award, where the "prize" was a bunch of shitty books published by *Writer's Digest*. This issue contains some of the best stuff ever published including the classic, Lost in the K-Hole, Bill Hicks is Dead, the incendiary rant/travel guide, How to Visit NYC (Without Pissing Me Off), Losing the Erection, Short Refractory Period, Nuts from My Mail Sac, The Only Live Review I'll Ever Write, Angerboy's Sick and Wrong Jokes, Origin of the Feces, The Flicker of the Idiot Box (video reviews) and much more. I have less than 100 left so they are \$4 until I have 20, when the will price go up.



If I'm going to have a cult following, I ought to sell some Kool-Aid — Jøsh

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| The Great Profanity Debate | \$2 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bill Gates / Larry King T-Shirt | \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

All prices include shipping within the U.S.

Or, send this form and a check or money order to:

Jøsh Saitz
P.O. Box 12
New York, NY 10021-0030



**Back Issues, Misfit Toys CD,
NegCap DVD & T-shirt are
available securely online at
www.negcap.com**



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